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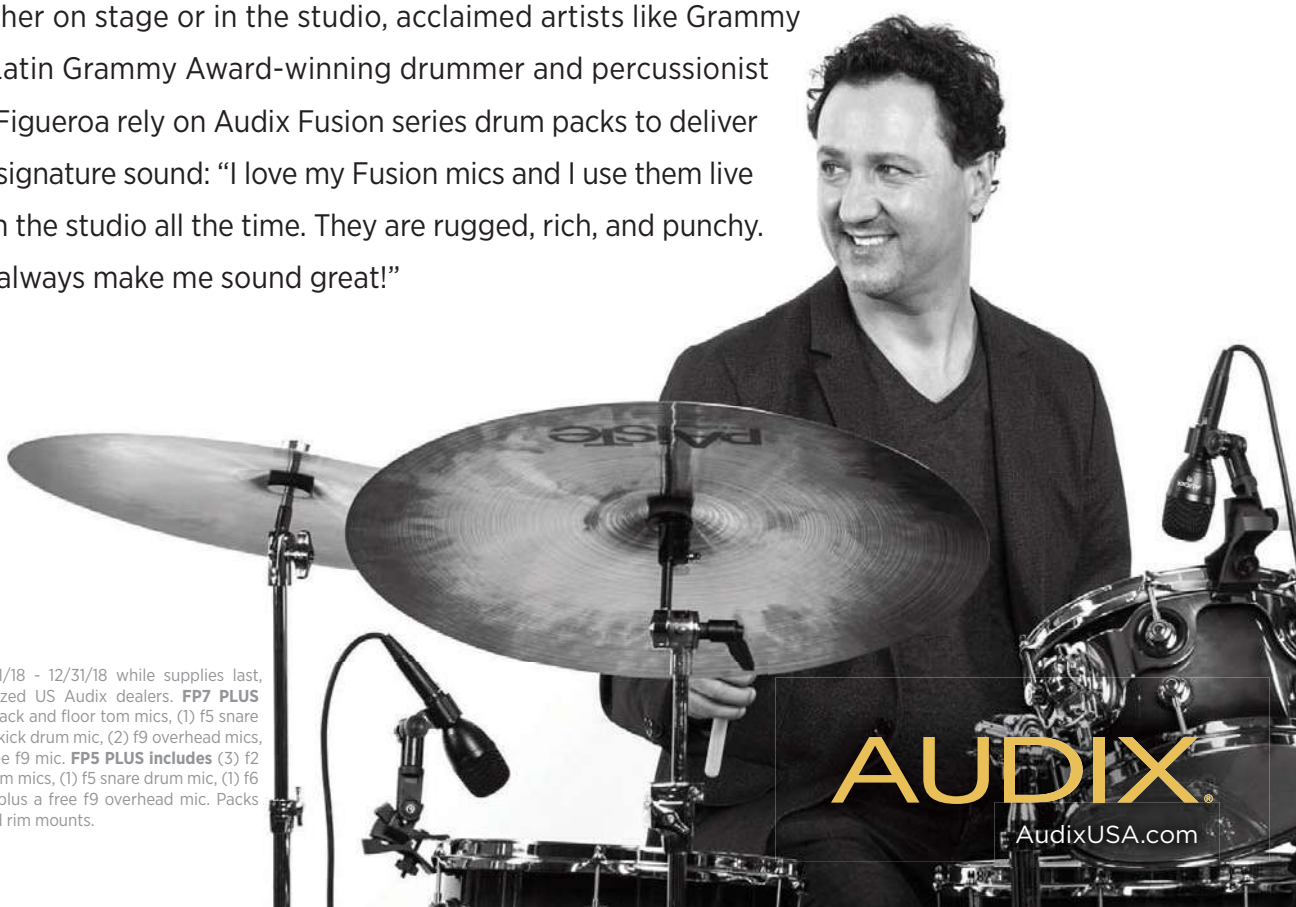

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ORIGINAL CONTENT

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Voices Refined

In conversation, this month's cover artist, Arejay Hale, exudes excitement. That should come as no surprise if you've ever seen him play with Halestorm, the rock group he started as a youngster. But as I listened back to our conversation for this month's piece, hearing the passion, fire, and, to be frank, *volume* in the drummer's voice was as invigorating and inspiring to me as learning about the journey he's led, and experiencing first-hand the dynamic performance he conveys onstage.

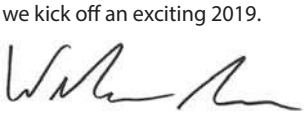
Considering where Arejay finds himself in his career in his early thirties, he *should* feel exuberant. After twenty years of touring the world and gaining plenty of songwriting experience and tutelage in the studio during the making of Halestorm's first three albums, the drummer feels that, in the album that they released this past July, the group has finally created a work that embodies a voice that's distinctly their own. You can find out more about Hale's path and his band's new album in this month's feature.

While listening back to my conversations with some of the other drummers I interviewed for *MD* this month, I noticed that a common theme emerged. Take J. J. Johnson and Tyler Greenwell, who share drumming duties in the Tedeschi Trucks Band, and who talk to us about the new release by their side project, Whose Hat Is This?, in this month's Out Now column. I found it inspiring that even though they play in a highly regarded, technically demanding, and extremely popular band, they make time to further explore their individual drumming voices—and to learn even more about the musicians they work with—by throwing themselves into a completely different musical environment.

And although we didn't get into it in his On Tour piece this month, Pat McGee of the indie-pop group Stars shared with us that he refined his own musical voice after graduating from a music program at Montreal's McGill University and moving to New York to find work in the jazz world. Surrounded by an intimidating number of talented players who were scrambling for the same gigs—and somewhat doubting his own abilities—the drummer eventually came to the realization that, in his words, "Music is music. You can play anything with anybody, no matter what. But the most important thing is to just play with people." And so after moving back to Montreal, he eventually found *his* group—the one in which he could establish his unique style, that he was perfectly suited for, and that would last him well into the next decade.

As always, we're excited for you to dive into the great features, gear coverage, educational content, and other material in this month's issue. But before I sign off, I want to draw attention to a new column that we launched in the December issue, the *Modern Drummer* Guide to Reading Rhythms. This month we pick up with Part 2 of the series, which is geared toward drummers who are new to reading music. I could spend an entire column discussing the benefits of reading music, and this new series is an ideal way to learn this invaluable skill, which can be an enormous aid in unlocking your *own* drumming voice, just like the players mentioned above have done in their own careers.

Enjoy the issue, and enjoy the holiday season. We'll see you in the New Year as we kick off an exciting 2019.



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Associate Editor

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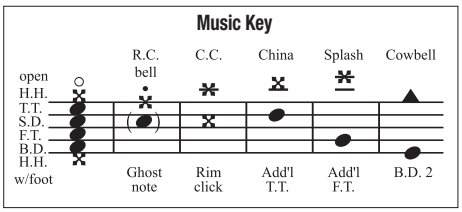

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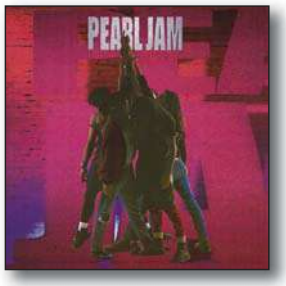
What's Your Favorite '90s Rock Drumming Album?



From the emergence of grunge and nü metal to evolutions seen in alternative and indie styles, rock music underwent significant change throughout the 1990s. Here we check in with our readers and social media followers to see which rock drumming performances from that transformative decade are their favorites.

Superunknown by Soundgarden [1994]. Matt Cameron's drum parts on that album are perfectly crafted. He grooves in odd times, bridges between each song's different parts in such great taste, and saves energy during verses before releasing it in fills. His playing is so precise and clean. And his drums sound fantastic. The drum fills he lays down in the instrumental sections of "Limo Wreck" and "Black Hole Sun" are exquisite. I sing those drum parts by heart.
Pablo Torterolo

Jeff Buckley's *Grace* [1994] with Matt Johnson on drums. That album completely opened my mind to how drumming could serve the music in a beautiful and emotional way.
Johnny Freeman

I'd have to say 311's self-titled album [1995]. I remember hearing it for the first time and marveling at how dark Chad Sexton's cymbals were, how his snare cracked, and how the whole album grooved while maintaining a heavy rock feel.
Ashton Tallmadge

Ten by Pearl Jam [1991]. Dave Krusen's playing on that record made me stop being a metal head for an entire decade. From beginning to end, that album and his chops do not disappoint.
Marc Rodriguez

Pork Soda by Primus [1993]. Tim Alexander's drumming was like nothing I'd heard before. From the syncopated double kick patterns to the grooves built around toms to the use of tension and release, it taught me more than almost any other album, video, or book since.
Ernie Learn

No Doubt's *Tragic Kingdom* [1995] was the first album I studied extensively, and I dissected every one of Adrian Young's parts. I always enjoyed his snare's pitch and the tone of his toms. And that's not to mention his awesome syncopation, which had just the right amount of complexity.
Javier Morataya

Live's *Throwing Copper* [1994]. This album has always been an inspiration to me. Chad Gracey's use of dynamics and unconventional grooves upended my fourteen-year-old self's sense of rock drumming when it came out. I spent an entire summer learning every note Gracey played and tried my best to emulate his parts. It took me from being a straight four-on-the-floor guy to a musician who had a much better handle on thinking outside of the box.
Andrew DeLaubell

The Smashing Pumpkins' *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* [1995] with Jimmy Chamberlin on drums. His jazz elements and syncopation never overshadow the song, but rather complement the music completely.
Elizabeth Goodfellow

Jimmy Chamberlin is great on all of the Smashing Pumpkins' albums, but my favorite would be *Siamese Dream* [1993]. I was always dazzled by his four-way independence on "Geek U.S.A." He kept time with his hi-hat foot at blistering paces while his other limbs explored complex tom phrases and ride patterns, all while keeping the figures crisp.
John Fitzpatrick

Blood Sugar Sex Magik by the Red Hot Chili Peppers [1991]. Chad Smith is groundbreaking on that record. He introduces ideas and concepts from the drummers that came before him and completely molds them into his own style. Flea and Smith revolutionized rock rhythm-section relationships and set the tone for musicians to come. That album inspired me to pursue music as a career.
Landon Blackburn

Want your voice heard? Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and keep an eye out for next month's question.

Dropped Beat

In the Style and Analysis piece in the November issue, Eric Fischer's photo on page 65 was taken by Michael Spleet.

In October's Jazz Drummer's Workshop, the Essential Al Foster records should have been listed as the following:
Joe Henderson *The State of the Tenor, Vols. 1 & 2*
Red Garland *Feelin' Red*
Carmen McRae *Carmen Sings Monk*
Miles Davis *Star People*
Blue Mitchell *The Thing to Do*

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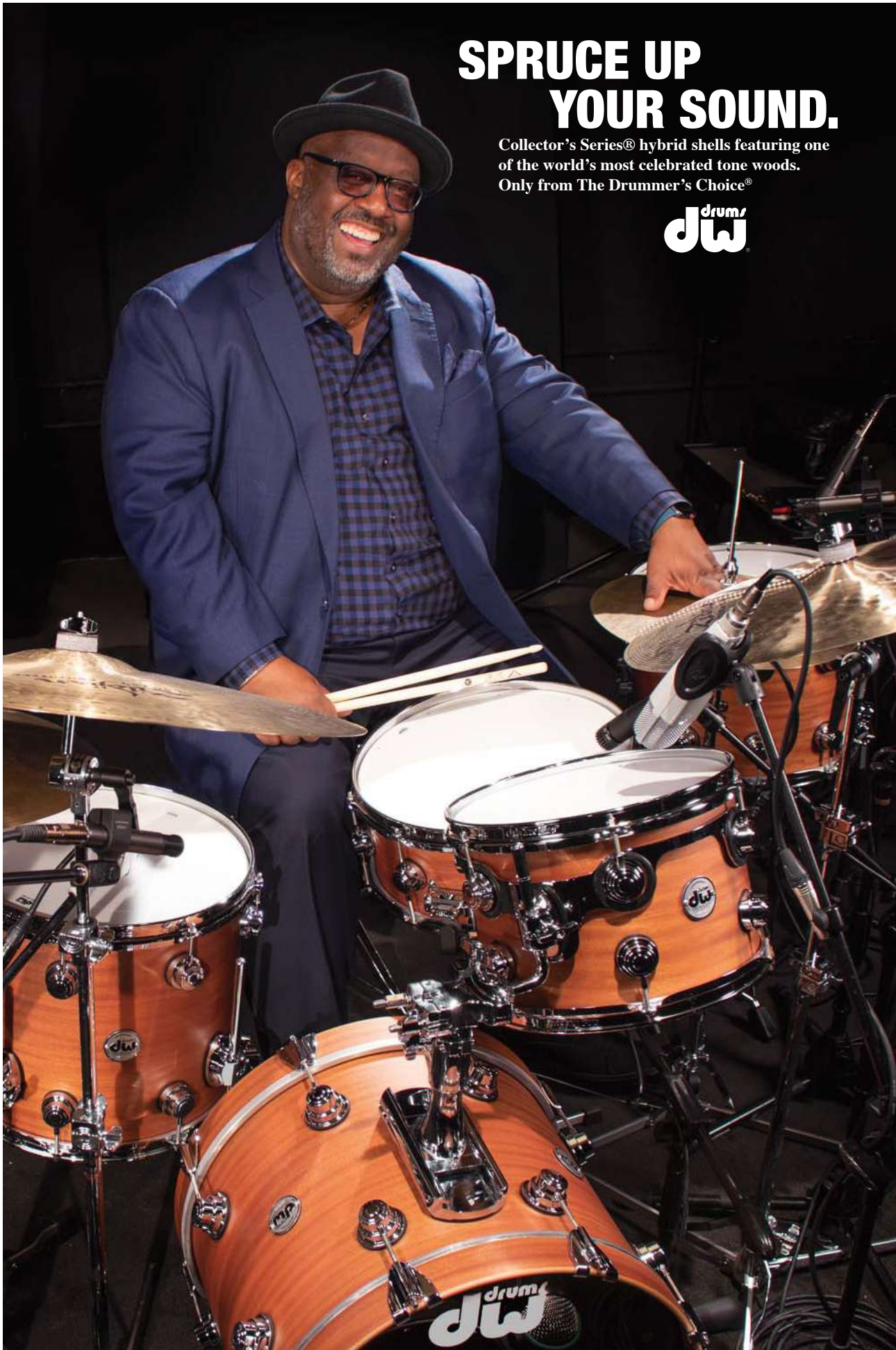

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OUT NOW

J. J. Johnson and Tyler Greenwell on *Everything's OK* by Whose Hat Is This?

The Tedeschi Trucks Band's killer double-drummers slay on their second completely improvised side-project release.

During a 2015 European tour with the blues-rock collective the Tedeschi Trucks Band, members of the group—including the ever-busy bassist Tim Lefebvre, the Grammy Award–winning saxophonist Kebbi Williams, and dual drumming monsters J. J. Johnson and Tyler "Falcon" Greenwell—booked an impromptu gig on an off night at the A-Trane jazz club in Berlin, Germany. Having previously played the venue with various outfits, Lefebvre reached out to the club a few weeks before their break and asked members of the Tedeschi Trucks Band if they'd want to throw an impromptu show together. "Tim asked us, 'Would you guys be interested in putting together a quartet and just playing if I can get it to happen?'" Johnson relates to *MD*. "And of course, we were all on board to do that. We got there with zero expectations other than wanting to play music together. No arranged compositions. No discussions or calling standards. We just did it. We were booked to play two sets, and it went amazingly well."

The group recorded the sets, capturing their spontaneous, genre-bending flow and later releasing it on their 2017 self-titled debut, *Whose Hat Is This?* And this November 16 the band unleashed their second full-length outing, *Everything's OK*, which was recorded in 2017 at the 8x10 club in Baltimore, Maryland. Throughout the sets of improvised tunes on *Everything's OK*, listeners can hear a potpourri of influences, including jazz, electronica, hip-hop, dub, and reggae. And joining Whose Hat to stir the gumbo that night was the Grammy-nominated hip-hop artist, producer, and educator Kokayi, who jumped right into the improvisational fray on vocals.

"There are no rules, and we're forced to get up there and just try to create anything," Greenwell says about the group's ethos. "A lot of [the dub influence] is Tim's experience in the EDM and electronica world. But I think you're hearing the natural inclinations that are strong with each individual player. Like the dub stuff, that's a big part of who Tim is as a bass player and what he gravitates to. And since the instrumentation is so small—just the two drums, bass, sax, and vocals—that stuff is very apparent. But we're not going for anything. We're just trying to create some chaos. Hopefully out of that chaos we'll catch on to something and weave together an experience for someone."

Although each member of the TTB has become familiar with one another's playing on the road and in the studio, the drumming duo found some surprising insights while playing in the Whose Hat setting. "I think you actually hear more of who we really are within this unit, because there are no barriers," Johnson says. "With [TTB], it's mostly based around arrangements and lyric-driven songs. With this, the lid is off, and I feel like I've gotten to know these guys on a whole other level because there's no cap on anything."

"You start seeing how each other's creative mind really works," Greenwell adds. "It's liberating, but it's daunting and terrifying at the same time. But to see how everyone's mindd work, it helps us in our other group as a rhythm section. This little exercise that we started doing that's now snowballed into a band and two records—and all this fun and musical liberation—it's a great exercise for any musician because it's helping us in the TTB. I feel we've gotten better as a band now that we've explored and stretched."
Willie Rose

J. J. Johnson plays Gretsch drums, Zildjian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, Remo heads, and LP percussion, and he uses Reunion Blues cases and DW hardware. Tyler Greenwell plays Gretsch drums, Zildjian cymbals, and LP percussion and uses Vic Firth sticks and Remo heads.

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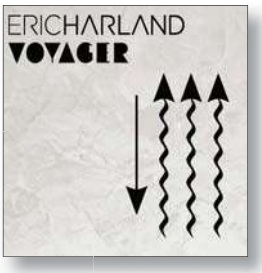

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The Bela Session (Kevin Haskins)

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Extinction(s) (Nick Pierce)

Pat McGee with Stars

On the road, the drummer melds acoustic and electronic elements to propel the indie veterans' infectious tunes.

Since 1999, the Canadian indie-pop band Stars has refined a keen hook-driven sensibility, fusing it with lush electronic soundscapes and dark, biting lyrics that are in contrast to the group's gorgeous melodies. Now the group is heading out on a North American trek through mid December. Pat McGee, who joined the group in time to record their 2004 breakout album, *Set Yourself on Fire*, is once again onboard.

While Stars' most recent long-player was 2017's *There Is No Love in Fluorescent Light*, McGee explains that the group maintains a busy writing schedule between tours. "It's been sort of start and stop," he says. "We'll do little hits and then take some time, and in those breaks we tend to record. I don't know how far we're getting away from the [typical] album model, but it seems like when we get a month or two, we try to bang out a couple songs and release them [individually]. It seems like the most effective way to keep our head in the game." Since the release of *There Is No Love…*, the band has put out the singles "One Day Left" and "Ship to Shore."

Live, McGee incorporates samples and plays to backing tracks to recreate the band's seamless blend of acoustic and programmed drum parts. "That's an element of the band that was very important to Torquil [Campbell, vocals] and Chris [Seligman, keyboards], even before I joined," he says. "Their influences are very much steeped in electronic pop like New Order, Pet Shop Boys, Saint Etienne—that kind of thing. And I was into drum 'n' bass, hip-hop, and hyper-rhythmic electronic music, like Aphex Twin and Venetian Snares. I'm no Jojo Mayer, but [those artists] are definitely an influence on what I do. Live, I play a Roland SPD-SX sample pad, and it's a workhorse. Programmed drums have a certain feel to them, and I'll always be interested in trying to replicate that feel live by using samples and triggers. But sometimes it doesn't work, so we also run tracks with Ableton Live. Occasionally we'll run a beat and I'll play on top of that, which I was sort of opposed to for a while. But now I think it creates an interesting sonic palette and groove that's maybe more appropriate for the show."

While McGee explains that playing along to a click adds a level of comfort for him onstage, it also provides an unexpected benefit for the rest of the band. "We used to have tempo wars back in the day when we were winging it," he says. "There used to be battles depending on how many beers we had or whatever state of mind people were in. Once we got on the click, people said, 'It's too fast.' And I was like, 'Talk to the boss, man. That's what we decided, and there it is.' So it ended a lot of arguments."

Nearly two decades into his tenure with Stars, McGee reflects on one of the factors that keeps them going. "I believe fundamentally," he says, "that the thing that's kept us together is that we split any spoils that we get from this evenly, six ways to the bank no matter what. However much anybody contributes to one song or another, everybody gets the same amount. I think that the number-one thing that breaks up bands is if someone's making more than someone else, or someone feels like they're contributing more than someone else. That inspires us to take part in everything. But you also realize that you don't have to take part in everything to still be an equal member. And I think diplomatically and democratically, that's really what has kept those super nasty fights out of our band." **Willie Rose**

Patrick McGee plays C&C drums and Istanbul Mehmet cymbals.

Also on the Road

Greg Morrow with Bob Seger & the Silver Bullet Band /// **Jeff Plate** and **Blas Elias** with Trans-Siberian Orchestra /// **Alan Cassidy** with the Black Dahlia Murder /// **Giuseppe Capolupo** with the Devil Wears Prada /// **Brandon Saller** with Atreyu /// **Nathan Price** with Broncho /// **Pablo Viveros** with Chelsea Grin /// **Ernie Iniguez** with Whitechapel

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Tama has recently expanded its popular and competitively priced Sound Lab Project (S.L.P.) snare drum series to include three full drumsets. The Fat Spruce kit features all-spruce shells, a wood not often used in drum construction, for a unique sound that we found satisfying and fun to play. The Dynamic Kapur kit features all-kapur shells. Kapur is a rainforest hardwood that offers a dry, dark tonality but is still rich and lively. The Studio Maple has all-maple shells and natural-finished hoops. We were sent all three sets to put through their paces.

Fat Spruce: Look and Build

Spruce is classified as a soft wood and isn't used often for ply drum shells. Although it's considerably softer than more common timbers like maple or birch, spruce is strong and flexible and has a long history in the manufacturing of musical instruments, like guitars and pianos, as well as stave- and solid-shell drums. Tonally, spruce has a rich mid-range and a full bottom end.

The S.L.P. Fat Spruce comes in a four-piece configuration with a 14x20 bass drum (8-ply, 7 mm), an 8x12 tom (6-ply, 5 mm), a 14x14 floor tom with legs (6-ply, 5 mm), and a 6x14 snare (8-ply, 7 mm). All four drums feature a gorgeous dark satin finish, die-cast hoops, and mini-tube lugs. The kit came with Evans G1 Coated single-ply batter heads. The bass drum has a classy-

Spruce

Kapur

looking antique white resonant head.

A new, interesting innovation featured on this kit is the Direct Flexi-Mount, which maintains a low profile while also promoting resonance. It's a two-piece system with a connecting plate drilled into the shell and an L-rod receiver with a hinge to allow some range of motion. I was surprised by how small yet functional this mount was.

Fat Spruce: Sound

The Fat Spruce drums sound huge. The tone is warm, round, and full. The kick drum is especially impressive; its sound is much larger than that of a typical 14x20 drum. All I did to tame some of the overtones was place a rolled-up tea towel between the kick pedal and the batter-side head, and the drum sounded gigantic while still having the punch and playability of a smaller kick. With no muffling, the toms sang nicely, even at a medium-low tuning. With a dampening gel applied to the batter heads, they warmed up beautifully. The die-cast hoops helped focus their tone as well.

The snare on this kit is the same S.L.P. drum that Tama debuted a few years ago. It has a huge tuning range, so you can get that classic '70s deep tone easily, and when tuned higher it remains warm and fat.

My favorite thing about the Fat Spruce kit is the feel of playing it. "Buttery" is the first word that comes to mind. Some drums can have a stiff and hard response, but the Fat Spruce drumset felt smooth and soft. The three-piece shell pack (no snare) is available for $1,299.99. The snare can be purchased separately for $329.99.

Dynamic Kapur: Look and Build

Kapur is a beautiful wood that looks like mahogany combined with bubinga. The finish of the Dynamic Kapur kit is a dark burst that accentuates the dark ripples in the timber. All of the hardware is chrome. This drumset really pops under stage lighting.

The Dynamic Kapur setup is a six-piece configuration with a 16x22 bass drum (7-ply, 6 mm), 6.5x10 and 7x12 toms (6-ply, 5 mm), 12x14 and 14x16 floor toms with legs (6-ply, 5 mm), and a 6.5x14 snare (6-ply, 5 mm). These drums come fitted with Tama's 1.6 mm Sound Arc hoops, which are inspired by vintage "stick saver" rims and feature an inward-bent top flange. These hoops are said to control the tone a bit more than traditional triple-flange versions. This setup has the same mini-tube lugs as the Fat Spruce kit.

Dynamic Kapur toms come with Tama's new Star-Mount system, which is similar to the company's popular Star-Cast mount but has four points of support on the rim rather than just three. The eyebolts can slide horizontally to accommodate different setups. The Star-Mount is light, low profile, and sturdy, and it looks good.

Dynamic Kapur: Sound

The Dynamic Kapur is designed to have a focused sound with enhanced attack and dark tones. This is unique because you usually don't get both attack and warmth from a drum. This kit also has an underlying fatness that I really enjoyed.

The Dynamic Kapur kit made me want to play fast grooves and chops. The entire

Maple

set was very responsive at all dynamics, and I could hear all of the nuances in fills and grooves with a lot of ghost notes. This kit would be right at home in funk, gospel, fusion, progressive rock, and metal. Every note has presence, and the drums resonate with a satisfying fullness. And the combination of attack and fatness is unique and pleasing to the ear.

While I preferred to tune the toms and kick medium-low, the snare felt more at home at a high tuning. Tuned up, it maintained the dark tone of the wood with the extra crack and snap usually found in a metal drum. This snare also had a higher volume ceiling than other wood drums I've used. The five-piece shell pack lists for $1,699.99, and the snare is available separately for $299.99.

Studio Maple: Look and Build

In my opinion, the Studio Maple is the best looking of the three S.L.P. kits. The finish is called Gloss Sienna and is similar to a light tobacco burst. This kit comes with natural maple hoops and arched single-ended lugs. The four-piece shell pack includes a 16x22 bass drum (8-ply, 6 mm), 7x10 and 8x12 toms (6-ply, 5 mm), a 16x16 floor tom with legs (6-ply, 5 mm), and a 6.5x14 snare (6-ply, 5 mm).

The rack toms feature the Direct Flexi-Mount, and the shells have maple Sound Focus reinforcement rings, which help strengthen the shell and color the sound to be a bit more old-school. The bass drum has 22 mm maple hoops.

The bottom snare hoop has two straightened sides to allow the drum to fit into a snare basket more easily. The rack tom hoops have flattened sides as well, so they can be placed close together when mounted on the bass drum. The bottom floor tom hoop has small cutouts to leave space for the legs.

Studio Maple: Sound

The Studio Maple isn't just any run-of-the-mill drumset. It exhibited the articulation and brightness typical of maple kits, but the wood hoops and Sound Focus rings warmed up the tone tremendously. The drums also had a more open voice and pronounced resonance, while the reinforcement rings helped tame some of the sustain. The result was a round and full sound with pleasant overtones and brilliant clarity.

The wood hoops caused me to play differently. I found myself going for more spacious grooves, and I ended up playing on the hoops a lot more than I ever have. The hoops produced clear, natural rim clicks as well. I was worried about their durability, but they felt sturdy and showed no signs of wear after hours of testing. I wouldn't recommend smashing rim shots on the snare all day long, but other than that, you can feel free to go to town on these. The four-piece shell pack sells for $1,699.99, and the snare is available separately for $399.99. If you're looking for a high-quality drumset that won't break the bank, any one of these Tama S.L.P. setups will serve you well.

Christopher Kozar

Tackle Instrument Supply

Backpack Cymbal Bag

A top-quality canvas-and-leather option inspired by the past but built to last.

Tackle Instrument Supply was founded in 2011 by indie-rock drummer Scott McPherson (Elliott Smith, Bright Eyes, Beck, etc.). As a working musician, McPherson grew frustrated with the failure rate of the drum bags that were available at the time, so he set out to make his own. The intention was to capture the simple, classic aesthetic of the canvas cases from the past, while drawing on the durability and precision of modern production methods. Among the items in Tackle's catalog is the Backpack Cymbal Bag ($215), which we have for review.

Rugged, Cool, and Reliable

The Backpack Cymbal Bag is available in 22" and 24" sizes and in a choice of black or forest green. We received the 24" green version. The case is made from fifteen-ounce cotton-canvas and the handles, buckles, and trim are leather. The base of the bag is reinforced with additional leather to prevent premature wearing and tearing. The large zippers, snaps, buckles, and rivets are made from high-quality pre-aged brass, and the stitching is super clean and precise.

The bag comes with three removable canvas sleeves that can be placed between cymbals for extra protection. I discovered a hidden function for the sleeves—as quick bass drum mufflers—at a gig where I had to play in a reverberant auditorium on a house kit with a large, unmuffled kick. I rolled up and folded one of the sleeves and wedged it between the pedal and drumhead, and it tightened up the resonance well. The sleeves have short leather hoops riveted to the top to make them easier to grab.

There's a nice-sized zippered pouch on the front of the bag that you can use to store personal items (phone, wallet, keys, etc.) as well as small accessories like hi-hat clutches, felts, drum keys, and muffling devices. The front pocket of the 24" bag is large enough to accommodate 16" hi-hats; the 22" bag can hold 15" cymbals. The interior has ample room to store a full set of cymbals. I threw in two full sets (two rides, four crashes, two splashes, and two pairs of hi-hats) and still had room to spare.

The shoulder straps were comfortable while not being overly padded, and leather belt-style adjustment bands kept the straps from loosening over time. The leather handle was also comfortable and easy to snap closed. The only minor issue I foresee for some gigging drummers who often play shows with minimal setup time is that it takes a few extra seconds to unstrap the front buckle to get access to the hi-hat pocket and accessory pouch. I'm being extra picky, but maybe including snaps here, in addition to the buckle, would be a benefit during super-rushed setups. But in terms of quality, design, and aesthetic, the Backpack Cymbal Bag is top-shelf.

Michael Dawson

Turkish Cymbals

Chris Wabich Travel Set

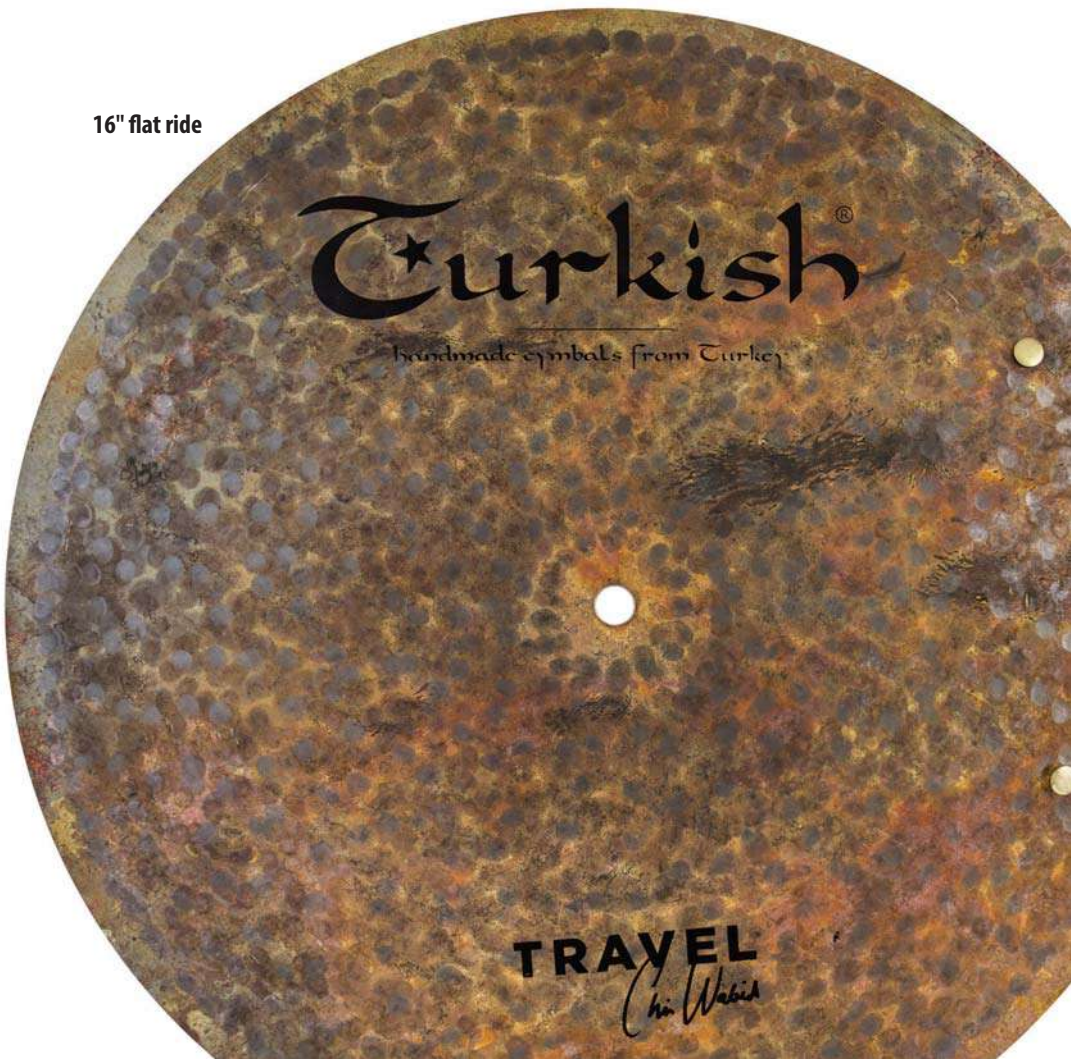
A simple three-piece configuration designed to provide classic tones that'll fit in a carry-on bag.

Istanbul-based Turkish Cymbals recently brought in twenty-year endorsing artist and jazz/rock/pop international road dog Chris Wabich to develop a set of small yet versatile cymbals that will fit in a suitcase or carry-on case to minimize issues when flying with them to gigs. "What's cool about this set is you can go on the road and you won't be in danger of being forced to check it by the airlines," says Wabich. "You can backline whatever other cymbals you need and not worry too much if they're decent or not, since you've got the gig covered with these." The series, called the Travel Set, comprises a pair of 13" medium-weight hi-hats, a 17" medium-thin crash, and a 16" flat ride with two rivets.

13" hi-hats

VIDEO DEMO
moderndrummer.com

16" flat ride



17" crash

The Specs

The Travel Set doesn't represent the first time Wabich has worked with Turkish to design cymbals. Several years ago he helped create the Vintage Soul series, which adapted classic manufacturing techniques to give drummers modern-made options with warmer, richer, and jazzier sounds. The 13" hi-hats and 17" crash of the Travel Set look similar to those in the Vintage Soul series; they have the same traditional finish, hand hammering, and wide lathing patterns. The 16" flat ride, however, is unlathed and raw, like the cymbals in the company's dark, dry Kurak series.

One concern Wabich had when developing the Travel Set was in regards to consistency. "Often handmade cymbals have too much variance," he says. "The Travel Set, however, can be played confidently—in any performance—right out of the box."

The Sounds

The 13" hi-hats are of a medium weight and are pitch-paired at the factory to ensure a balanced, musical sound that will fit any style of music, from classic to contemporary. The foot chick is crisp and strong, and splashes have a nice spray without an abundance of mid-range overtones. The closed stick sound is woody and tight, providing super-clean articulation when played on top with the tip of the stick and a denser and slightly broad "chunk" when struck on the edge with the shoulder. They're soft and expressive enough to play smooth swing patterns, yet bright and robust enough to cut through in louder amplified situations. Think equal parts Papa Jo Jones and Stewart Copeland.

The 17" crash is medium-thin and has a soft, flexible feel. The wash is controlled enough so that the bow can be used for light ride patterns, while delicate and aggressive accents elicit a quick, flashy crash with a full-frequency shimmer. The bell is clean and musical as well, and there's some subtle sibilance in the decay that echoes the complexity of a well-worn vintage cymbal.

The oddball in the series is the 16" flat ride with two rivets. Wabich describes it as having "the perfect mini Elvin [Jones] in-your-pocket" vibe. Played lightly, the stick attack interacts with the sizzle of the rivets in a very balanced and satisfying way. I found myself wanting to explore broken Jack DeJohnette–style ride patterns when I had this ride on my kit. It can also be crashed and hit aggressively to produce quick bursts of dark color within a controlled dynamic. If most of your performances live in the lower dynamics, you'll love the soft, gritty vibe of this ride. If you need more power, you'll likely want to swap out the 16" flat ride with something more standard, but you'll be able to roll with the 13" hi-hats and 17" crash in any situation.

Michael Dawson

Mr. Muff

Vintage Sound Tools

Fluffy, furry stick and beater attachments for soft, attack-free tones.

Mr. Muff is a German company offering stick and beater attachments designed to soften attack, limit dynamics, and achieve a round, puffy tone in seconds. The Muffstick drumstick attachment comes in two weights—Light and Heavy—and the Muffkopf bass drum beater cover is available in Standard and Deluxe sizes. We received both Muffkopfs and the Muffstick Heavy to review.

Muffstick Heavy

This duster-looking device consists of an 11.5"-long green-felt back that's 2" wide at the opening and 4" wide at the top. There's a 1x8 pocket stitched in the back that holds thin 7A to thicker 5B drumsticks snuggly in place. The front of the felt is covered in black and gray polyester fur. For lighter playing, the Muffstick will stay in place without any further reinforcement. To keep the cover from flying off the stick when you're using higher velocity strokes, there's a grosgrain strap that you can hold onto with your index finger.

The Muffstick effectively eliminates nearly all the attack from the stick hitting the drumhead, leaving behind a wide, puffy sound that's even softer and rounder than the tone you get from a soft-felt timpani mallet. You can use the Muffstick to play smooth cymbal swells, quiet tom grooves, and dark, muted snare backbeats. There's no rebound from the stick when the Muffstick is installed, and there's a bit of wind resistance that slows down the stroke. You obviously wouldn't need this accessory for every gig, but when the situation calls for something dark and whispery, it's cool to have this ready and waiting. List price is around $35.

Muffkopf Beater Covers

The Muffkopf Standard bass drum beater cover has the same skunk-like black/gray fur and green-felt backing. There's a shoestring-style cord laced around the perimeter that gets tightened around the beater with a plastic fastener. The beater head inserts through a slot in the Muffkopf, and when the cord is drawn tight, the cover stays firmly in place while you play. The fur covering produces a heavily dampened sound with a soft, round attack and a muted tone. You can also flip the Muffkopf inside-out so that the green felt strikes the drumhead, producing a less dampened but still softened, vintage-type tone. Like the Muffstick, the Muffkopf can be installed and removed in seconds, and would be a valuable accessory for drummers playing in volume-controlled situations (acoustic jazz, church services, etc.) or when a round Roland 808–type tone is desired. List price is around $35.

The Muffkopf Deluxe is a large alternative with a thick white or black fleece cover. This model is basically a bass drum silencer. It produces almost no attack, and the volume is impressively curtailed to a dull thud. When used to play a large, open kick drum, this cover produced a deep, guttural concert-style sound. When it was used on a small, dampened bass drum, the sound was distant and subtle. I can see this option coming in handy for teachers and practicing drummers looking to control bass drum volume so as not to annoy family members or neighbors. As we experienced with the Muffstick, the wind resistance created by the large, fluffy Muffkopf Deluxe cover slowed the beater acceleration significantly, but it didn't make playing the bass drum labored. Although an extreme option, the Deluxe might come in handy when you need to play extremely quietly. List price is around $43. For more information, visit mistermuff.de.

Michael Dawson

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LCD/Legado

B20 Bronze Snares

A limited run of rolled-shell drums built from handcrafted Turkish cymbals.

VIDEO DEMO
moderndrummer.com

Love Custom Drums recently teamed up with its sister company, Legado Cymbals, to create a limited run of twenty 5.5x14 Luxo Raw and 6.5x14 Caspian snares featuring bronze shells rolled from premium-quality B20 cymbal blanks that were forged in Turkey. We received a sample of each to review, so let's check them out.

Specs

The sixteen-gauge bronze shells of these snares are left completely raw and feature a large welded seam, which contributes to their tough, rugged appeal. The shells, which have a straight wall (no flange) and subtle snare beds, are outfitted with machined-aluminum, single-point tube lugs that are etched with LCD script on top and bottom. A simple side-action throw-off and PureSound twenty-strand snares—connected with fabric straps instead of wire—are included. The heads on our test drums were Evans Power Center Coated batters and 300 series bottoms. All of the hardware, including the throw-off, butt plate, lugs, and tension rods, are insulated with plastic gaskets to minimize metal-on-metal contact. The 5.5x14 drum comes with 2.3 mm triple-flange steel hoops, while the 6.5x14 has super-sturdy die-cast rims. Separate LCD and Legado metal round badges finish the look.

Sounds

Both of these drums exhibit an explosive, vibrant tone with supreme sensitivity. Lightly tapping the batter heads with the fingers elicits a crisp, clean snap, while they have serious power when smacked with full-volume rimshots. The 5.5x14 has broader overtones at all dynamics and is a little more responsive at lower volumes. The 6.5x14 is punchier and has additional headroom at upper dynamics. Both drums record well, exhibiting rich, balanced tones with a satisfyingly controlled decay. Hard hitters should grab the deeper version. The 5.5x14 is plenty powerful as well, but it also services delicate playing with a little more nuance. The 5.5x14 Luxo Raw snare sells for $957, while the 6.5x14 Caspian is $1,185.25.

Michael Dawson

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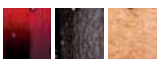

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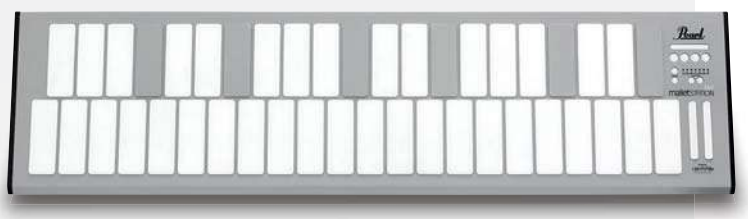

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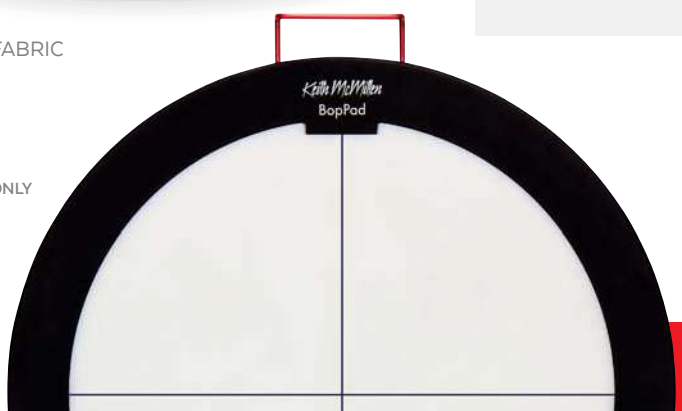

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GEARING UP *ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE*

Portugal. The Man's

Jason Sechrist

Portugal. The Man's Jason Sechrist first spotted Ludwig's new hot pink Vistalite kit at Summer NAMM 2018. Although it took a few months for his to arrive, it was worth the wait. This stunning set fits perfectly into the lefty drummer's recent live shows. "My singer is big on visual aspects," Sechrist says. "He likes that Ginger Baker [double kick] look, and we were trying to get a flashy, colorful, and vibrant kit. We also love Vistalites for their stage volume. The kit offers a really aggressive and punchy tone with a defined crack that's ideal for outdoor festivals. When we get onstage, and everyone is thirty feet apart, we can achieve maximum volume."

Sechrist has added an extra bass drum to round out the look of the kit, but it isn't going to waste during the band's shows. "I'm not necessarily slamming away at double kick patterns," he says. "But I am finding ways to throw in the extra kick drum in basic fills."

To maximize volume without sacrificing feel, Sechrist uses Vic Firth X55A sticks, which offer more reach. "They've got the quickness and lightness of the 5A," he says, "but with the power of a 5B."

Sechrist plays acoustically for most of the band's repertoire, but he adds electronics for certain songs. A Roland SPD-SX multipad is positioned below his ride cymbal and above the bass drum so he can access it with either hand. And triggers on the kick and the snare are employed when he needs to stack on hand claps or electronic tambourine samples. "We're open and enjoy using all the tools," he says. "But the thing about electronics is that unless you're using in-ears, it's a very un-dynamic experience."

While acknowledging the need to be able to utilize electronics in today's music, Jason points out that technology isn't foolproof. "That's the beauty of a real drumkit," he says. "It's not going to fudge out on you in front of 2,000 people."

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Hardware: DW 9000 Series bass drum pedals and 6000 Series hi-hat, Ludwig Atlas and DW 9000 Series stands, Ludwig throne

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX multipad and RT-10K and RT-30 triggers

Accessories: RTOM Moongel

Interview by Brandy Laurel McKenzie

Photos by Maclay Heriot

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A
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Results will be announced in the April 2019 issue of *Modern Drummer*.

Drum Wisdom
Bobby Sanabria

Inspiration is as important as information to this famed performer and educator. His latest project provides heaps of both, as it reimagines a great American musical tale.

by Jeff Potter

Sarah Escarraz

When Bobby Sanabria grew up in the Fort Apache section of the South Bronx in the '60s and '70s, it was undeniably one tough hood. But for the budding drummer, it was paradise. "I'm very privileged, and I thank God that I grew up there in that period," he says. "Like Dickens wrote, 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.' The Bronx was burning, but all this incredible music and culture was happening."

Sanabria's early career profile rose upon joining Mongo Santamaría's band, where he lent his powerful, nuanced Latin jazz groove to the 1984 LP *Espíritu Libre*. Since then he's performed with the royalty of Latin and jazz music, including Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Ray Barretto, Mario Bauzá, Chico O'Farrill, Paquito D'Rivera, Celia Cruz, Arturo Sandoval, Daniel Ponce, Jon Faddis, Randy Brecker, Henry Threadgill, and Max Roach's elite percussion collective, M'Boom.

In addition to his roles as a drummer, percussionist, composer, arranger, conductor, producer, and filmmaker, Sanabria is also a busy clinician and a faculty member at the Manhattan School of Music and the New School university, where he leads Afro-Cuban jazz ensembles.

Sanabria has led numerous small and large ensembles, including his current Multiverse Big Band. Since his first release as a leader, *NYC Aché* (1993), featuring his nonet, Ascensión, he's earned an impressive seven Grammy nominations.

The latest Multiverse double-disc release, *West Side Story Reimagined*, delivers an adventurous modern spin on Leonard Bernstein's 1957 musical theater masterpiece. One critical theme of the work—as immortalized by "America"—is the plight of the Puerto Rican community striving for equity and justice. Because that ongoing struggle today encompasses ever more incoming cultures, Sanabria has expanded the score's rhythmic vocabulary to span across Latin America as well as encompass African, jazz, funk, and R&B elements, all framed in fresh imaginative arrangements. Driving his twenty-one-piece band, Sanabria's vivacious kit work delivers all those influences in innovative combinations. Recorded live at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in Manhattan, it's a thoroughly thrilling event.

Bernstein's timeless piece holds added resonance for Sanabria, a New Yorker of Puerto Rican descent, giving his updated vision a sociopolitical wallop. "Besides being a tribute to Bernstein's centennial," he notes, "most of the money will go to the Jazz Foundation of America's Puerto Rico relief fund for hurricane victims."

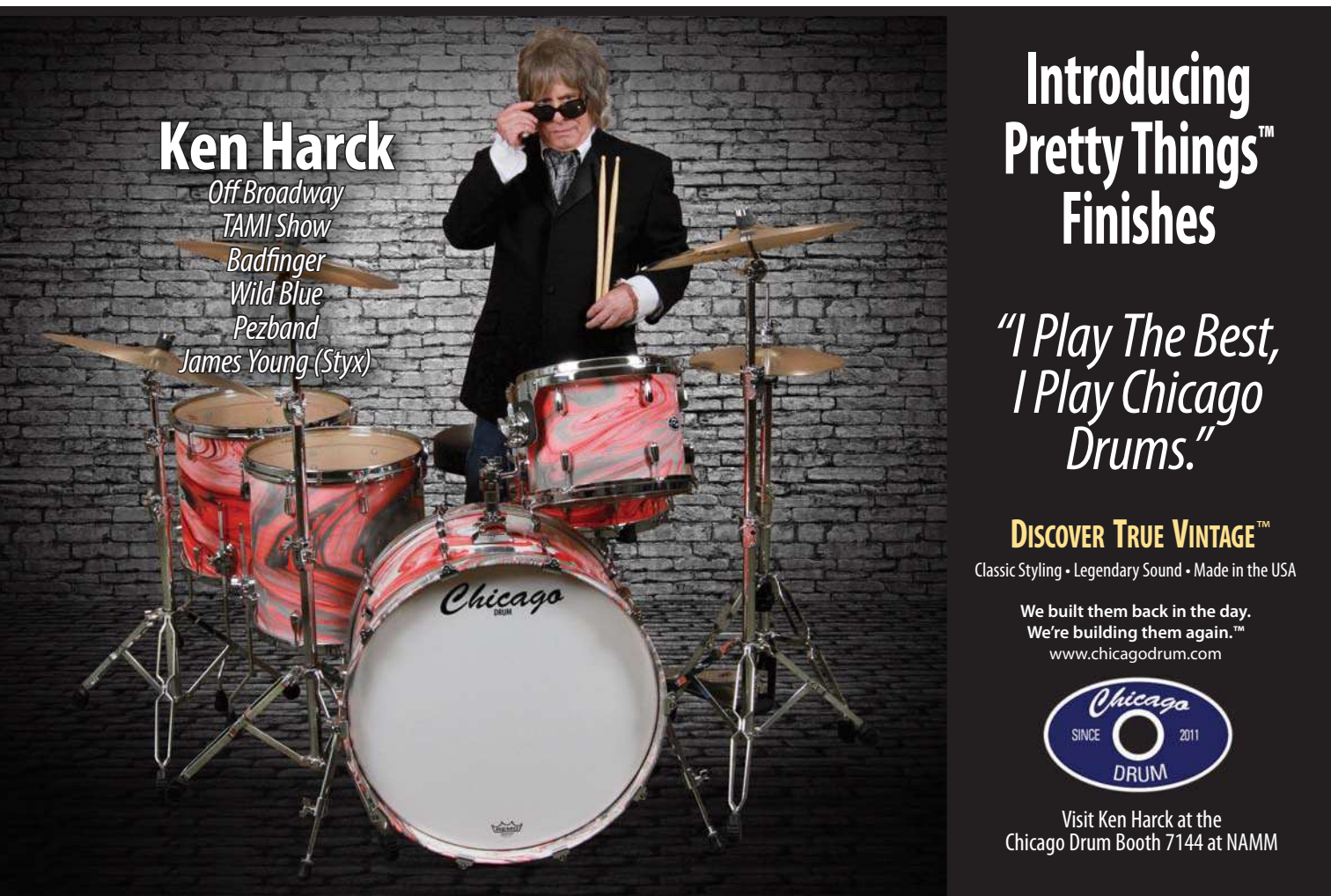
How does the multifaceted drummer command his massive project? "Driving a big band, you have to have the subtlety and nuance of a small group drummer along with the power and muscle to hold a band of that size together," he says. "But most of all, you have to *inspire* it."

Allen Spatz

Tools of the Trade
Sanabria plays a Tama six-piece Starclassic drumset (bubinga or maple shells). His snare choice is a 5.5x14 (either bubinga, maple, or Bell Brass models). He uses LP percussion products (including five mounted cowbells), Sabian cymbals, Remo heads, and Vic Firth sticks.

I call the big band the Multiverse, rather than just a "Latin jazz band." When you're talking about Latin America, you're talking about twenty-one countries, each having dozens of styles. Actually, there are twenty-two countries if you count New York City, which is another branch of Latin America—and I'm not joking. But there's a lot to draw from. Plus, since I grew up in the South Bronx, that means funk, R&B, soul music, and hip-hop are also part of my DNA. I want to be able to draw upon all that, and I need musicians who can do that as well. That's always been the challenge—to find musicians that have that type of vision or don't have the emotional baggage of, "No, I don't like this kind of music," or, "I like this kind of music more than others." That's always been the downfall of jazz musicians: the intellectual snobbery of jazz sometimes bites us in the ass.

The key to being a great bandleader is you've got to have a vision. And then you've got to have balls of steel. [laughs]



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Bobby Sanabria

Plus, conviction and the technical knowledge to put the various puzzles together. Also, in the case of the big band, there's the knowledge I have as a composer and arranger. Going back to Bernstein, the conductor has to viscerally get the music across on an emotional level while technically knowing exactly what's going on in every aspect of the orchestra. On top of that, you have to be a psychologist *and* a psychiatrist, a good planner and a good taskmaster. Just imagine playing Rubik's cube or chess constantly.

The secret to any great musician is having knowledge of the history of whatever style they're dealing with. Using Led Zeppelin as an example, they were deeply entrenched in the whole history of the blues and black American culture. And they used that to their advantage. Unfortunately, I don't see that knowledge of history in most young musicians. The best drummers in any category have that all together. If you talk to a drummer such as Zoro, he could talk with you for hours about the history of R&B, and David Garibaldi has broken down funk to a modern science—he could tell you about all the different players and their nuances.

The way I play, I simultaneously think like an arranger. I'm orchestrating all the time. If you listen to the current album, there are lots of subtle, nuanced things I'm doing. As Wynton Marsalis said, "The highest example of art is nuance."

When I was eighteen, I pursued Keith Copeland to study with him. At my first lesson, he said, "Sit down and play for me." I started turning the seat to lower it because he sat very high. He said, "Hold on! What the f**k are you doing!" So I said, "What the f**k am I doing? The seat is too high, man!" And he said, "When you sit down on somebody's drumkit, you don't start adjusting everything. How would you like it if I came to your house and didn't like the way the furniture was arranged, and I started moving it around? Sit down, shut up, and play for me!" I thought, *Wow! I finally got the right teacher.* Within a week he started getting me to swing. He made me a professional.

At drum clinics, what I'm trying to get across to drummers most of all, in regards to Latin music, is to not only respect the rhythms in and of themselves, but at the same time, to have a healthy respect for the culture. That's the defining thing. People want to learn how to play a songo rhythm, a mambo, a Brazilian baion, or a maracatu, but they don't spend the time getting into the culture. You *have* to get into the culture if you want to play these different types of music that fall under the rubric of Latin music with any authenticity.

I see a cultural divide in this country that's really sad. When I do clinics and performances, I'm well aware of that—that I'm a representative of a culture. So I always put my best foot forward. I'm communicating, "Look, this culture that you think is so strange is really American culture. America is not just North America; it's Central and South America, too. So this culture is *your* culture, but it's been kept away from you through racism, prejudice, ignorance, and cultural insensitivity. I've been placed in this position, and I take it very seriously. There's a bridge. I'm at the bridge there to welcome you: "Hey! Cross over and check out my world. Don't be so fearful of this music. And if you *are* interested, remember: it's not just rhythms; it represents a *culture*."

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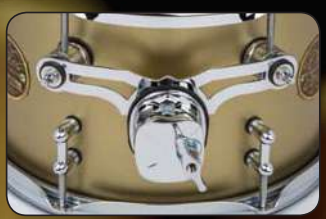

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Arejay
Hale

More than twenty years into their career, the modern rock trailblazers Halestorm continue to scale the genre's highest peaks. And on the band's latest release, their energetic drummer and founding member got a chance to fully explore his true voice in the studio.

Story by Willie Rose

Photos by Rick Malkin

It can be difficult to take your eyes off Halestorm's drummer, Arejay Hale. At the band's concert at the Stone Pony in Asbury Park, New Jersey, this past August 6, Hale towered over his low-lying Pearl kit and flat-mounted toms, delivering massive backbeats with full-arm extensions, switching lead hands mid-measure on a whim, and lacing adrenaline-fueled grooves with an abundance of stick flips.

But don't let a deft stage presence distract you. In Halestorm, the rock group Arejay started with his sister Lzzy when they were still in grammar school, the drummer *slays*. On that August night his blazing rock chops were on full display, as he fired off rapid double bass flourishes between burning full-kit fills with a continuous, frenetic energy. The drummer tastefully peppered single bass drum 32nds into creative, powerful rock grooves. And all the while, with his wild, full-strength technique, he made it look easy.

The Pennsylvania-born siblings Lzzy and Arejay Hale have been playing music together since 1997. When they started in their early years—Arejay at ten and Lzzy at thirteen—their father, Roger, joined them on bass. After countless regional and national gigs, in 2003 the group added Joe Hottinger on lead guitar, and one year later Josh Smith on bass and keyboards.

Halestorm's solidified lineup would go on to release several full-length albums while building a massive global audience thanks to rigorous world tours. Their self-titled 2009 debut climbed to number 40 on the *Billboard* 200 chart, led by the single "I Get Off." In 2012 *The Strange Case Of…* sold 24,000 copies in its first week and earned the band a Grammy for the song "Love Bites (So Do I)." And in 2015 *Into the Wild Life* peaked at number 5 on the *Billboard* 200.

This past July 27, while on the road for an international trek that lasted through October, Halestorm released their fourth Atlantic Records album, *Vicious*. Recorded at Rock Falcon Studio in Franklin, Tennessee, and produced by Nick Raskulinecz (Foo Fighters, Alice in Chains, Rush), the effort sees the band branch out to write their first album completely in the studio without cowriters or collaborators. With Raskulinecz's influence, the group's familiar catchy hooks, powerful riffs, and creative arrangements still abound, but there's a new sense of energy that the band members felt was missing from previous efforts. "We wanted to make *Vicious* a little more experimental," says Arejay Hale. "I feel like we had more freedom this time to capture what we do most of the time, which is play live. And we wanted people to be able to buy the record, or whatever—listen to it, stream it—and be able to get something close to the experience of seeing a live show."

Modern Drummer spoke with Hale while he was home in L.A. during a brief break from Halestorm's 2018 tour.

Q: When you say that producer Nick Raskulinecz wanted you to bring "showmanship" to the studio, what do you mean?

A: He wanted me to get into it—shake my head and throw my hands in the air and stand up if I had to. He just wanted me to bring the energy.

MD: What was it like working with Nick Raskulinecz on *Vicious*?
Arejay: Nick's a legendary producer. He's done so many incredible records. He's worked with the Foo Fighters, Deftones, Queens of the Stone Age…. It was different from any other experience we've had with a producer. Often we'd forget that he *was* our producer; [it was like] he was just our buddy hanging out while bouncing ideas back and forth with us.

We also didn't really have anything written before we went in to record. The four of us went into the studio and pretty much wrote the entire record—just the four of us with Nick coaching us. So it led to much more of a genuine-sounding album than our previous records.
MD: Is that the first time you've written an album like this?
Arejay: Yeah. For the most part with the last three records there was a lot of cowriting—a lot of collaborations—which is great. I'm all for collaborating. You can come up with some great stuff by having more than one brain involved. But after doing that for so many years, when we went in to make this record, we just felt a lot more confident as songwriters and that we could do more of it ourselves without outsourcing so much to other writers. So the end result was kind of a much more honest-sounding record. No gimmicks, no frills, no clever… well, I mean, we try to be clever, you know, poetically. But nothing so cliché.
MD: How much input did Nick have on you from a drumming perspective?
Arejay: Nick's worked with Dave Grohl, Taylor Hawkins, Brann Dailor, Neil Peart, Will Hunt, Ray Luzier, Abe Cunningham…. He's worked with the greatest, highest-energy performing drummers out there, and he's captured so much energy on tape. I was stoked to finally work with him, because with every record we've done—and I'm proud of what we did—when it came to the drumming, that's the last thought that I have leading up to tracking. I'm mostly focused on making sure the songs are good.

So when I get to sit down on the drums, often producers will want me to simplify everything and want it to be easy to grasp, which is fine. I think part of the reason that our first couple records did what they did was because they had so much space, and everything was a lot more simplified. Nick made sure that none of us were overplaying, but he also added a lot of creative elements and encouraged a lot more creativity out of me. He wanted me to do takes where I'd go crazy and cut loose, and it felt very freeing.

When we're playing live, oftentimes I'll go off script to throw a curveball to keep it loose and interesting—not just for the audience but for us, too. I feel like if we play the same set every night, it gets pretty stale. So a lot of those elements that we try to apply to our live show, we started to bring to the table in the studio, which is kind of difficult. In the studio, there's no audience, and there's no adrenaline pumping. It's more of a sterile vibe.

So while recording, Nick would use a drumstick as a conductor's baton. He'd stand in front of me in the live room while I was tracking, get in my face, and say, "Come on! Bring out the crazy stuff!" I looked forward to tracking the drums with him every single day. We'd do fifteen to eighteen takes of each song, because we didn't want to do a lot of editing. We wanted it to be a sole performance. So I'd have to play the song from front to back and nail it perfectly, but also try to bring that special energy and vibe to the track. It was a real challenge, but it was so much fun.
MD: You don't sound reserved throughout the new record.
Arejay: I appreciate that. That was part of the challenge—finding that balance dynamically between the sections where you really bring the fire and add a lot of flair, and the sections where you open up and leave a bunch of space. As far as my drumming goes, it feels a lot more dynamic, or a lot less linear than the last couple of records, where everything had to be simplified, and where there was maybe one moment where I could throw in a clever drum fill or something. But with Nick, he wanted to make sure that every drum fill had its own unique flavor.

He was very thorough and detailed, all the way down to what cymbal I'd hit—whether I'd hit two cymbals or use two hands on one cymbal. And occasionally he wanted me to apply more showmanship in the studio. He'd say, "You're playing too stiff and concentrating too much. You're not opening up and playing totally free like you do live." And that was such an advantage that he had as a producer. He'd seen us live many times, and he was a big fan of our show. As a producer, he knew exactly how to capture that energy.
MD: When you say "showmanship" in the studio, what do you mean?
Arejay: He wanted me to spin my sticks and flip them up in the air while recording. I mean, he also didn't want me to break any overhead mics. [laughs] But he wanted me to get into it—shake my head and throw my hands in the air and stand up if I had to. He just wanted me to bring the energy.

A lot of producers will want you to play a different way [from how you do live], and I understand that. Playing in the studio is a totally different dynamic. In my experience, you need to ease up off the cymbals and dig more into the toms, because [otherwise] they're going to get buried in the mix.
MD: Did you make any adjustments to the kit in the studio?
Arejay: Here's a trick, and it's something that we're proud of having done on *Vicious*. We took the bottom heads off the toms and miked them from underneath. This really helped to bring all the sounds out of the kit. If you listen to any record, the first things to get swallowed up in the mix are the toms. And we definitely noticed that when we were getting the mixes back after tracking.

At first we were a bit disappointed because the toms would disappear. But eventually we really hammered our guy that mixed *Vicious*, Chris Lord-Alge, to make sure the toms were there. And he delivered. But miking the toms that way really isolated them so they weren't picking up so much wash from the cymbals, snare, or kick. When we'd listen to a take and solo the toms, we could barely hear the other voices. And then when I'd hit the tom, you could hear it so clearly. The toms just popped out.

So thanks to that, I could bring a little more energy to the recording. At the same time, I was trying to keep in mind proper techniques of recording, because, you know, a lot of the great drummers are able to bring the energy and use proper technique at the same time. But in this case, the objective was to bring as much live energy to the record as possible.

MD: Could you describe that idea of proper studio technique?

Arejay: When you're in a recording environment, you automatically think and play a little bit differently. You're focused more on getting the parts right and making every stroke count. We try to do that live, too. But in a live setting, it's more of a performance. Everybody is listening to each other and playing to each other, and I feel like there's more space for dynamics. With every record that we've done, I felt like I had to make sure every stroke was consistently played with the same intensity. And with this record, there was a lot more experimenting with dynamics.

And this kind of touches on my beef with modern rock drumming—a lot of times, it can be so boring and linear. Basically, [it's] all the same level, intensity, and sound. If you listen to a lot of modern rock records, you can hear that everything is sample-stacked—there's the same reproduced snare sample every time that the drummer hits the snare or plays a fill.

That kind of thing works for some bands. But we just wanted to make a very real and organic-sounding record. And I think that people are kind of screaming for that now, especially in the rock world. So we just wanted to throw a wrench in the gears and make a really great-sounding record that works on radio, while still evolving.

MD: Have you used some of those stacked samples in the past?

Arejay: I mean, of course. [laughs]

Especially with our first two records—our self-titled album and *The Strange Case Of…*—they were done like that. But keep in mind, this was back in 2007, 2008, when we were making our first record, and I think it was 2011 or 2012 when we made our second record. It was a different time. That stuff was relevant, and we were a new band. We hadn't proven ourselves yet. Although I think that we definitely had proved our worth as a live band—we got signed as a live band. But when we wanted to make our first record, we were terrible songwriters.

So there was a lot of cowriting and preproduction. And we also were so inexperienced in the studio…. I'm very grateful to this day that Howard Benson produced our first record, because he had his "set way" of making an album. He was the ultimate producer for new bands who had no idea what they were doing. It was like studio training working with him, his team, and Mike Plotnikoff, who's an incredible engineer and producer with an amazing ear. I'd say that Howard's team was the reason that our first two records came to be.

And when we wanted to make *Into the Wild Life*, that was the first time that we wanted to experiment with someone that came from a different background. So we worked with Jay Joyce, who was great because he came from more of an alternative side. That album was a lot more experimental. We tried a bunch of different techniques and instruments. We used synths, acoustic guitars, piano…. And also what I like about that album is that it flows from front to back, like one complete musical piece.

I love the way it turned out, but when we toured on that record, we were kind of getting people at shows saying, "I love this record, but you guys have so much more intensity live." So after all those experiences, when we sat down with Nick for *Vicious*, we agreed that we wanted to capture that intensity from our live show.

MD: Did you switch out any drums during the recording process? The drum sound on "White Dress" stands out.

Arejay: We used mostly the same kit throughout the record. Nick has an old Slingerland bass drum that's just decrepit. It's got this hideous black wrap, and it looks like a total piece of shit. But it sounds amazing. [laughs] The wood fibers are so dense that it just has this snap. Its attack sounds so good. So we used that same kick drum for the whole record.

We also used a Gretsch Bell Brass snare. It's the same snare that Nick used with Sean Kinney on Alice in Chains' *Black Gives Way to Blue*, another incredible album that he made, and one of my favorite records.

And some of the toms that we used on the record were actually given to Nick by Neil Peart. So that was cool. I got to play Sean Kinney's snare, Neil Peart's toms, and this old, piece-of-crap Slingerland kick drum—and it all sounded great! [laughs] I swapped out a bunch of cymbals, too. I had some different Zildjian EFX cymbals, a bunch of weird, trashy sounds that I was stacking, and some

Drums: Pearl Reference Series
A. 6.5x13 snare
B. 6x10 Popcorn snare
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 18x6 Rocket tom
E. 8x12 rack tom
F. 16x16 floor tom
G. 21x6 Rocket tom
H. 18x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 13" A Pocket hi-hats
2. 14" Oriental China "Trash"
3. 17" K Custom Hybrid China
4. 21" A Sweet Ride (brilliant) with 7.5" Volcano Cup Zil-Bel on top
5. 18" A Heavy crash
6. 14" A Custom EFX crash
7. 18" A Heavy crash
8. 9" Zil-Bel
9. 9" Oriental "Trash" splash
10. 18" Oriental China "Trash"

Percussion: Latin Percussion Mini Timbales and Classic Rock Ridge Rider cowbell

Sticks: Vater VGS5BW Gospel Series 5B

Heads: Evans, including EC Reverse Dot snare batter with a Hazy 500 resonant, Onyx tom batters, EMAD bass drum batter with EQ3 Smooth White resonant, and System Blue series batters on Rocket Toms and mini timbales

cool splash cymbals with holes in them.

MD: Could you talk a little about your live setup?

Arejay: My setup has kind of morphed and evolved over the years. Little by little I started to adjust my kit so that it's good for my posture, joints, back, and muscles, so I'm not destroying myself every night. But everything is spread out so I can still take big swings.

I used to have two floor toms on my right side, and then I swapped one out to the left. It's nice to break up some of the responsibility of having to move to [only] one side to do a roll down the toms. I can go right, or I can go left. And I tried to lead with my left hand on the hi-hat. After a while, that became more comfortable, so I threw my ride on my left side too. [laughs] Switching lead hands helps share the load of the impact that I'm getting on certain limbs and joints.

I've been with Pearl for maybe five or six years. They're all cool and accommodating, and we've become close personally, which is the biggest thing for me. The same relationship goes for Zildjian, Vater, Evans, and Latin Percussion. I'm blown away that they want me to represent their products.

MD: On "White Dress" you play a fast ghost-note pattern in the verses. Is there anything you worked on to develop that difference in dynamics between louder and softer strokes?

Arejay: You know, it's funny that you mention that. Here's another thing about Nick: he's the first producer that I ever worked with that didn't discourage ghost notes. [laughs] I feel like every producer in the world hates ghost notes. Like, "Why are you playing that stuff? Just play the snare." I've talked to other drumming friends of mine, [and they've told me] the producer will put a giant sign up in a live room that says, "No f**king ghost strokes!" or something. [laughs] And I remember seeing a picture of that and thinking, God, that's so sad.

But when I worked with Nick, he wanted me to add those and said, "Play those ghost notes a little bit louder." And if you listen to the song, in the verses of "White Dress," you're right, there's a tight little ghost-note pattern. I was originally playing a simple beat, with 8th notes on the hi-hat, which has become one of my favorite things to do. I don't know why, but I think it's because over the past couple years I've just developed this insane love for hip-hop. Warming up to hip-hop has solidified so much of my playing and timing.

So going into making this record, I wanted to provide some of those elements within our sound. Again, I was just getting so bored with modern rock drumming. So when I warm up to Yelawolf, Kendrick Lamar, Jay-Z, or some old Run-DMC or NWA, that helps me get in a solid mindset tempo-wise. But I wanted to bring some of those fresh

flavors and different techniques to rock music. I think that rock needs more of a melting pot like that, or different elements coming into it. A lot of times in big choruses, you have to play wide-open, washy cymbals, and stuff like that. But I felt like in verses and bridges, I could experiment with weird, trippy, almost trap beats.

You'll hear that in the verse of "White Dress," and you'll also hear it a lot in the song "Do Not Disturb." That song was really fun to play because it's a simple, solid beat with a lot of cool ghost strokes, and a lot of weird, trippy fills that land on 2 or the "&" of 2.

MD: Would you say that your recording mindset has evolved compared to past albums?

Arejay: When I go back and listen to our old records, I just cringe because my playing seems so simple and dumb. But I think that's probably part of the reason that we got here. We needed to make records that were very spacious and that fit into the mold of modern-rock radio at that time. Our first album came out ten years ago. So at that time on rock radio, it was Nickelback, Theory of a Deadman, Shinedown, and all the bands that we toured with. They were burning up the radio, and we had to fit in there somewhere.

I mean, our first single was a song called "I Get Off," for f**k's sake. [laughs] It was around a time where "stripper rock" was the big thing. So we wrote this song called "I Get Off," which had more of a metaphorical meaning. It really talks about how much we enjoy playing live, and we say, "I get off" on that, kind of in a tongue-in-cheek way. But then, everybody on the business end thought, "This is perfect. This is a song about sex. It'll sell!" [laughs] But I have no regrets because that was the song that kind of launched us. You can't bite the hand that feeds, and you can't complain.

MD: You guys seem to be on a consistent, three-year release schedule.

Arejay: Well, I think this record was more of an exception. We definitely put more time into this one than we did for any other one, partially because we feel like we're at a point now that if we half-ass it, then it's going to be a huge disappointment. So with me, I'll never want to put a record out that I don't absolutely love front-to-back, and I don't want any weak points.

But we also kind of dug our own graves, because now we're kind of notoriously known as a live band, and that's been our strongest suit and our bread and butter. So when we put a record out, we're on the road constantly. And we feel very lucky that we get to go to so many different countries. We're doing the States, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan…we're going all over the place. So I think a lot of the reason that there's so much space between records is because there are so many places that we need to play several times to make sure that everybody gets to come out.

It's a totally different world now than it used to be. You used to go on tour to promote your record and sell records. Now that music is free, you make a record to promote your tour and concert sales. So it's kind of done a complete 180. I think that's a big reason that the album cycle is so much longer now than it used to be. In the past, you could put a record out every single year, tour for six months, and sell a bunch of albums. Now the only way that bands can make an income is from touring. We don't make money from music sales anymore.

MD: Does that model bother you?

Arejay: It doesn't, because we're so used to being on the road. My entire life has been out of a suitcase, since I was ten years old. I feel like such a freak sometimes, because I don't know how to settle in. Sometimes I won't even unpack after I come home from a tour. But the good thing is that not only

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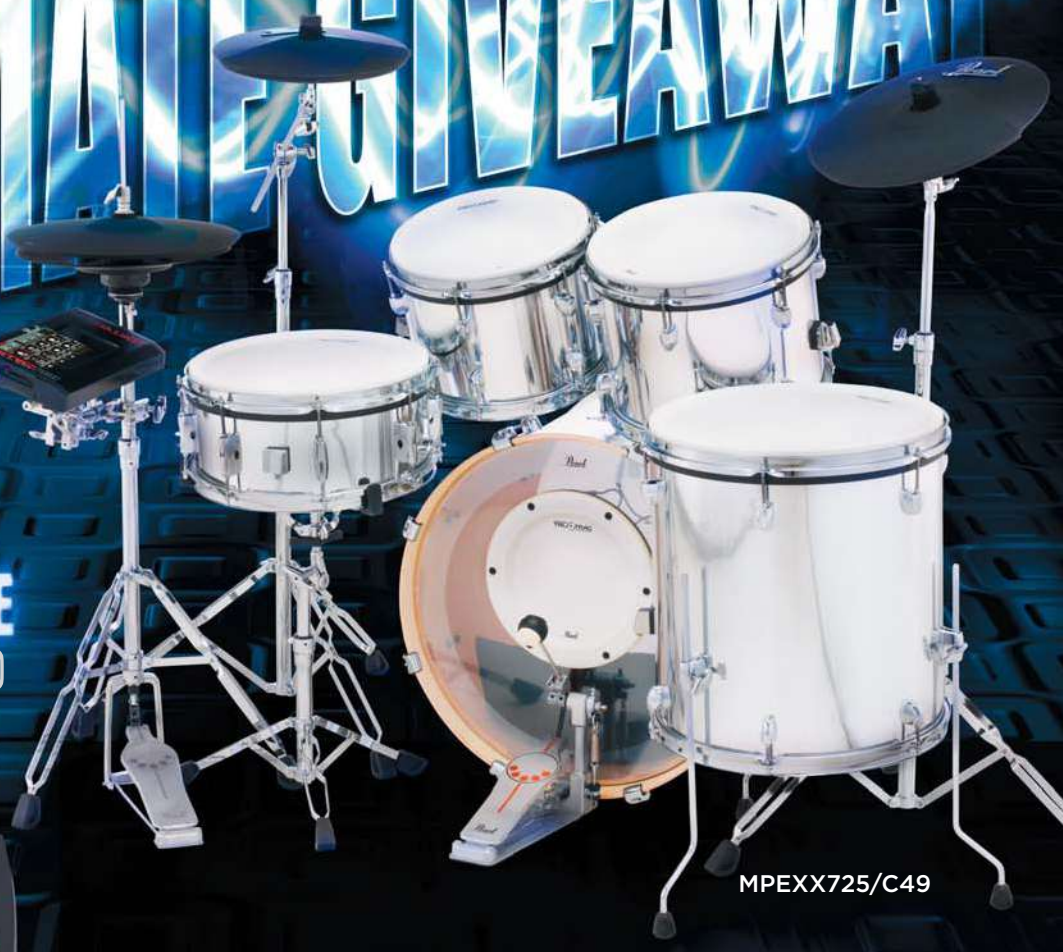

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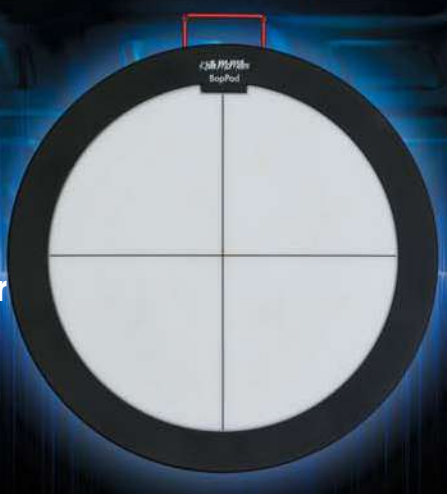

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do we have immediate family in the band, but Joe and Josh are practically my brothers at this point, and even our crew—we're all one big traveling family.

MD: Do you have more of a positive outlook on the effect that streaming services have had on the music business?

Arejay: Absolutely. I think that anyone who's bitter about the way the music business is evolving is shooting themselves in the foot, because they're not accepting that that's the direction everything's going. We're always going to be evolving and moving up and out. And music genres are always going to evolve.

I see a lot of new artists bypassing the traditional ways of making music. You make a record, put it out there, promote it yourself, and book your own shows. I know so many bands, especially out here in L.A., that are doing it on their own. And they're doing well. And sometimes you can get noticed by the right people and take it somewhere huge. So I think it's a great medium for artists to get their music out.

MD: Do you enjoy that touring lifestyle?

Arejay: I really do, but you take the good with the bad. You have to enjoy everything. I really try to be conscious of keeping a good headspace when I'm on the road, because you can so easily just fall into focusing on all the negative aspects, like the lack of sleep, the malnutrition, the constant traveling, time-zone changes, being away from home and loved ones…. That can get really hard after a while.

In our lifestyle, the people and the fans that see it from the outside, they only see us performing on stage, or they hear the music, hear us doing interviews, and see us having a good time. And those are all the fun parts. We enjoy the work. But what they don't see is the twenty-three other hours of just draining, grueling work that goes into it.

MD: How do you stay in a positive mindset on the road?

Arejay: If you don't take care of yourself physically, you can fall into a negative headspace and become discouraged to keep going. You can start to feel resentful toward traveling, touring, and playing shows. Now that touring has become the main part of the job, you need to be able to tour for ten months out of the year for three years straight. And the best way to do that is to take care of your health.

Luckily I have two guys in L.A. to talk to—Mark Goodwin from Sick Puppies, and John Bach from the band Mount Holly, who gigs all over L.A. We get together and talk about this stuff often. We've all concluded that the best way to stay healthy is to not smoke on tour, to take it easy on the drinking, and to diet and exercise.

You know, it's like we've gone from cocaine, booze, and rock 'n' roll to gym day-passes, health shakes, and rock 'n' roll. [laughs] But I see so many bands that don't maintain their health and that just can't keep up with the rigorous touring schedule. They'll roll into the venue looking miserable because they've been driving all night, and all they had to eat was truck-stop food and McDonald's.

Now that we depend so much on live shows to make a living—and not only for ourselves but for everybody on our team—there's so much riding on us being able to perform. And if we can't perform, then that means that everybody is out of work.

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There's a lot riding on that. So that's just something that Mark, John, and I are big advocates of—we want to make sure that up-and-coming bands know that you can really burn yourself out. And if you want to do it for the long run, then you really have to stay healthy.

MD: Do you get a chance to practice on the road?

Arejay: I do. Lately I've been focusing on my chops and rudiments. I'll practice rudiments along with a metronome and slowly increase the speed until they feel smooth. Or I'll listen to hip-hop or electronic music and play along to the songs on a pad. That helps me not only with my chops and timing, but also with the fluidity of going between different rudiments—going from five-stroke rolls to paradiddles to flam paradiddles, to all the different diddles out there. [laughs]

And for me, electronic music, hip-hop, or alternative four-on-the-floor stuff is good for me to warm up to because it's very steady tempo-wise. So when I'm going in and out of the rudiments, the tempo is consistent. It's a challenge, because with certain rudiments you want to speed up or slow down. If you're doing it to a set tempo, then that keeps everything solid and spaced out nicely.

MD: Was there a specific point when you were coming up when you decided that you were really going to take music seriously?

Arejay: Oh, boy. I mean, you're right that there are those moments. But the thing is, I think that there have just been a lot of them. [laughs] When we first got signed, the first of two shows that we did was at this venue called the Machine Shop in Flint, Michigan, which is kind of a famous venue for up-and-coming bands. It's like the place to go in Flint.

We were opening up for Seether and a band called Dark New Day, and that was the first show where I got really nervous. I never used to get nervous before a show, but that was the first time where I thought, *The heat is on.* We [had] just got signed to Atlantic Records, and this was our first show—what if people didn't like us? [laughs] And it's funny because I was never that guy. I never cared what anybody thought. But this was the first time in my career where I actually cared. And we played the show and everybody loved it. And that was when it was like, *All right, I think we're doing the right thing here—now we're starting to get it.*

At the second show, we were opening up for Shinedown at this festival called Summerfest in Milwaukee. And I thought the same thing: *What if they hate us?* Thank God our team—our record label, management, and booking agent at the time—had seen us plenty of times in New York. We'd been showcasing for all these people for a year or longer in New York, and they kept saying, "We should talk to you guys about doing a deal." We'd get excited, and then they'd say, "Actually, we need you to do another show." We did so many showcases, but luckily they saw something in us that we probably didn't, and they felt confident enough that as soon as they signed us, they said, "Let's put them in front of some audiences—the people will love them." So we got really lucky there.

It's just been one slow milestone after the next. And I think there's a misconception that a lot of bands have. They think that there's one moment that they go from nothing to blowing up. In some cases that does happen. But for us, before we tried to get signed, we wanted to get really good at our craft. So it's just been a slow and steady path the whole time.

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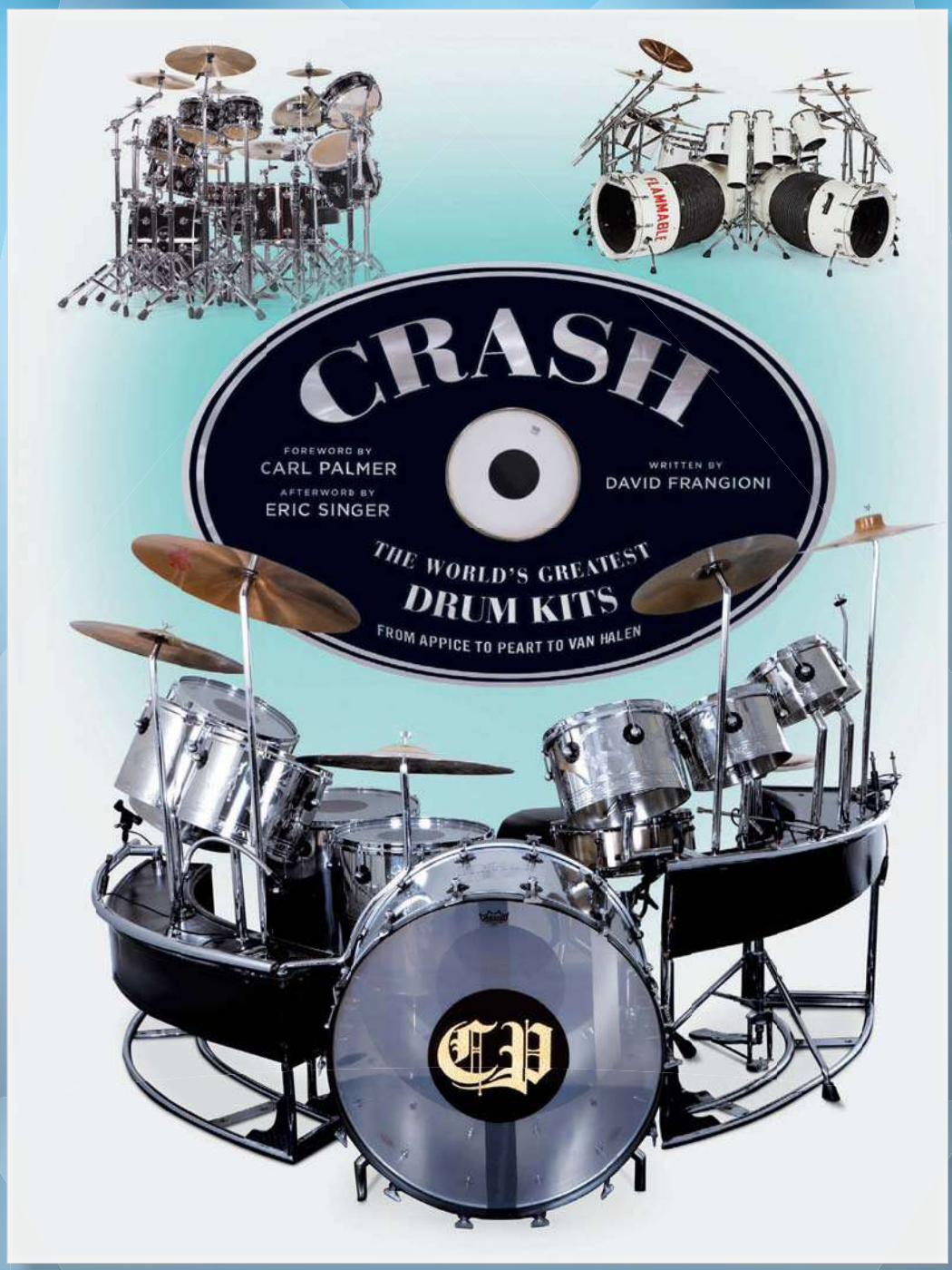

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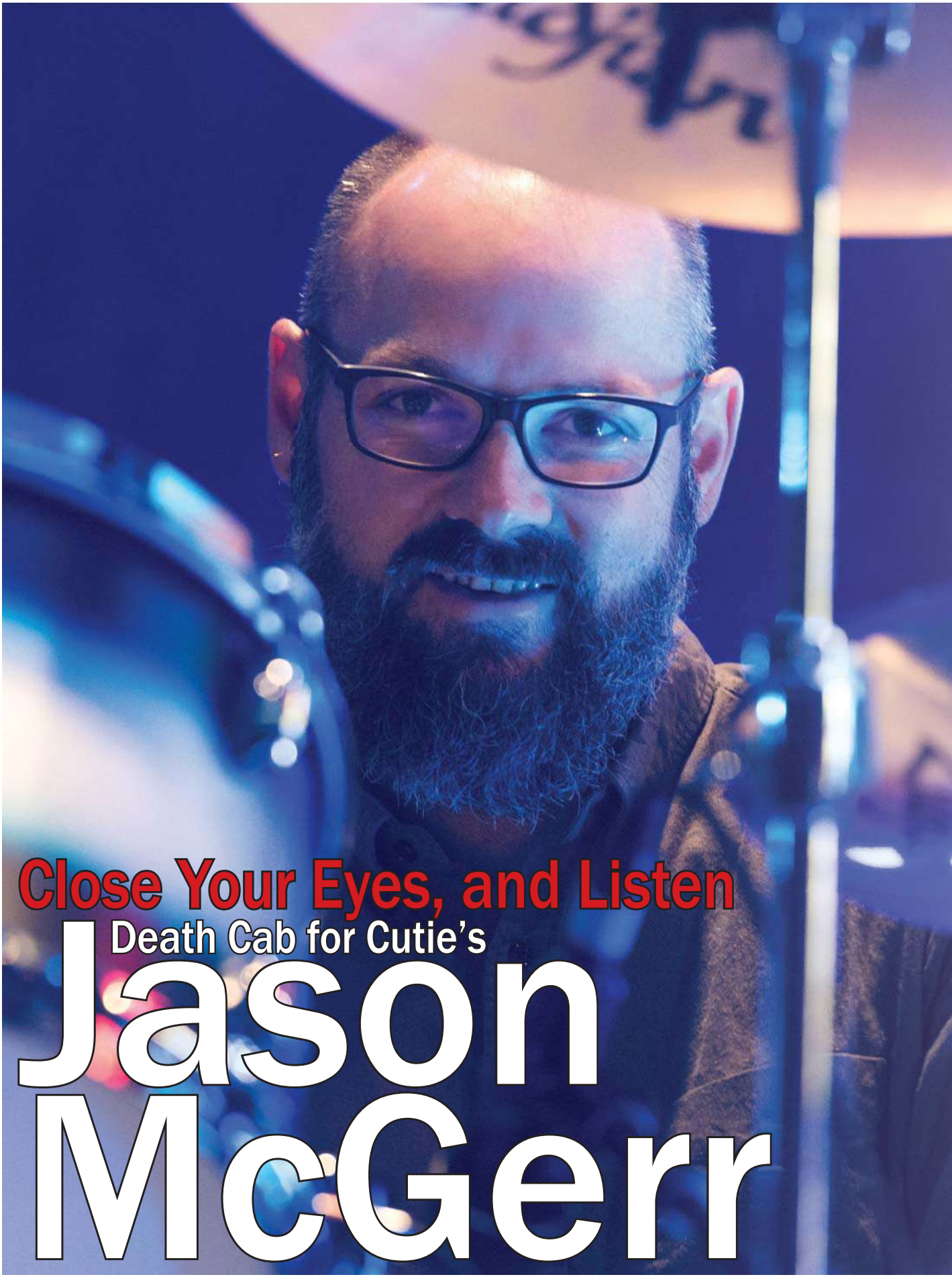


Close Your Eyes, and Listen

Death Cab for Cutie's

Jason McGerr

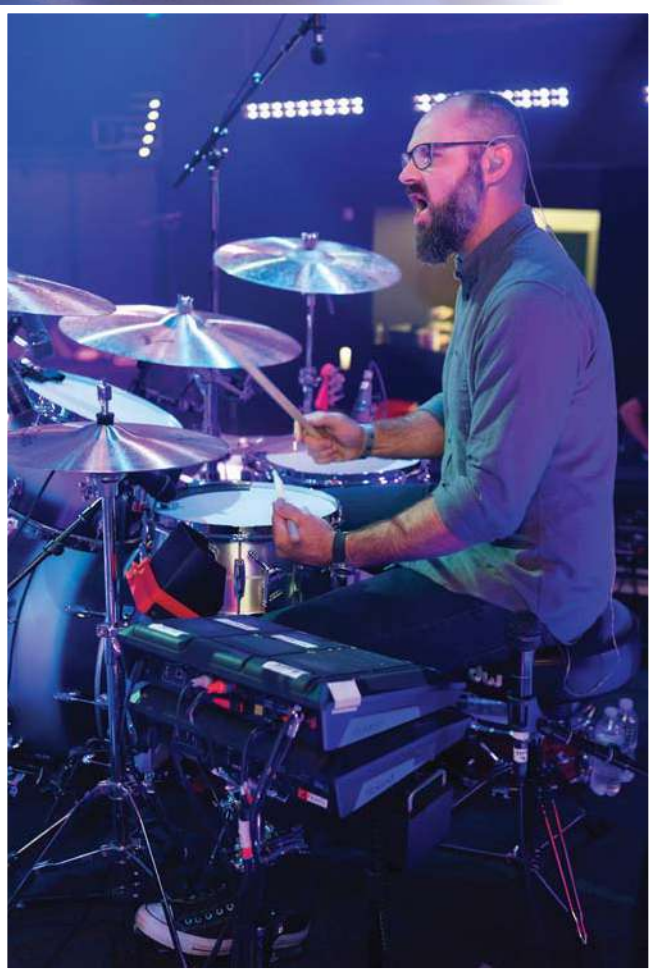
Most of us would be perfectly content to play in a Grammy-nominated rock band, make an album every couple of years that's consistently beloved by fans and critics, and go on huge tours the world over. After fifteen years in Death Cab for Cutie, Jason McGerr is apparently not one to simply coast through these milestones. When not on the road, he wakes at 5 A.M. to hit the shed for a few hours before his family wakes up. When he spoke with us from the road in August of 2018, he'd gotten off the tour bus early that morning, sat in the stands of a Wyoming baseball park where the band would be playing that night, and "put the metronome on and practiced moving different groups of accents in five played as 8th-note triplets against quarter notes with my feet."

One can presume this math equation happened *after* coffee, but does it have anything to do with playing a Death Cab show that night? "It doesn't really," says McGerr. "It's just yoga. I think that independence and deep technique practice brings you that much closer to the internal drumming space that you should be in when you're playing with your band."

McGerr says this as a player who has clearly put a great deal of thought into all aspects of his craft. Death Cab's new album, *Thank You for Today*, brings many changes: new gear, new lineup, and a new direction in technique for the drummer. But you might not ever notice any of this unless you were looking for it—and that's the whole point.

Story by Stephen Bidwell

Photos by Alex Solca



MD: You worked with producer Rich Costey once again on *Thank You for Today*.

Jason: Yes, he's the same producer we used for our previous record, *Kintsugi*. We recorded just about the whole thing at his Neon Lights studio in Santa Monica. It had taken about a year and a half to two years' worth of writing to come up with the core group of songs that we felt were worth chasing down and whittled those down a ten-song record. It took about three months of active tracking to record it.

MD: I gather your tracking setup in the studio was a bit unconventional.

Jason: I was in this little box in between control rooms; it was like a privacy cabin. The downside was that for the whole record, I didn't make eye contact with anybody. But the benefit was that I was forced to listen more than I've ever listened before. I really focused on exactly how my drums sounded in terms of dynamics, on when they hit compression too hard, or on certain harmonics that react with a lot of outboard gear.

It really helped me [in terms of] listening to what the rest of the guys were doing, because a lot of the time we were all playing live, or along to some old analog drum machines. More often than not I'd end up playing really quietly, just because there was a super cool thing happening between room mics and close mics being super squashed. So it was an ear session, not an eye session.

MD: Was there any particular gear that had a big impact on tracking this record?

Jason: You know, I picked up a great 1950s Gretsch Broadkaster kit from Wood & Weather Drum Shop. I hadn't ever had a real vintage Gretsch. I play modern Gretsch drums, and they sound amazing, but I went back and forth between a vintage Broadkaster and the new Broadkaster for the new record, and I've got to say that I totally get it—I get the vintage Gretsch vibe. I think that that instrument really helped in terms of feeling inspired by my sounds.

MD: What was the cymbal setup like for this record?

Jason: I have some older As that go with me; but the K Custom Special Drys are really amazing in the studio, so dynamic. They do this explosive thing if you barely hit them, which is cool. If you're really playing light, the rides are super sticky and smoky. There's kind of a vibe when you hear them played back; it sounds like tape slowed down.

The last track on the record is called "60 and Punk," and I'm playing this 23" K Custom Special Dry, and when I hit it, it just sounds like half-speed tape: just *poish*, this crazy response from barely playing it.

I usually show up with five or six full sets of cymbals, because I never know

a cymbal for every style.

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Jason McGerr

what the room is going to be like unless I've been there before. This particular room wasn't very big, and the ceiling was quite low. I always want to be able to throw up a set of cymbals that don't oversaturate the room and have a good balance with the drumset. In this particular studio, having those K Special Dry series, and Keropes, and older Zildjians from the '60s, made for a nice, buttery pairing with what we were trying to do.

MD: The song "Your Hurricane" sounds like it might be a nod to an earlier Death Cab record. [Death Cab singer and songwriter] Ben Gibbard played drums on some of the early albums—do you still get demos with him playing drums on them?

Jason: If he demos stuff with drums these days, he'll grab a loop. He's infamous for just pulling a krautrock beat, like *dun-dun-dun-Dat-dun-dun-dun-Dat*. That's like his writing tool. So I'm always trying to get out of krautrock jail. "Hurricane" was all of us kind of working on our parts in a space together; the demo was pretty bare bones.

In the past sixteen going on seventeen years, I've had enough license and space to develop my parts. But to answer your question, there is definitely a throwback vibe on the album, "Hurricane" specifically. I've seen a lot of press around the album referring to it as a rebirth, so I think that there's a lot of semblance musically to what we've done in the past. But we're still embracing a lot of contemporary music and moving forward as much as possible.

MD: It does seem to tie a lot of old and new threads together; you still have this core vibe of a guy in his bedroom trying to make a power-pop masterpiece, but with all the tools of a well-equipped studio. On that subject, what gear did you use as far as electronics and other textures?

Jason: A combination of older machines, a Roland 808 or SH-101, or a Linn LM-1. And Zach [Rae, keyboards and guitar] had some modular pieces that ran percussive loops. I programmed a bunch of stuff in my Native Instruments MASCHINE, and a little in Reason; it's just a combination of layers.

I look at contemporary music and drumming this way: the drums should be forward; you should hear and feel me playing the drums, with a little bit of support underneath, like a percussion ensemble. Sometimes there was programming or analog drum machines with me playing over the top, and sometimes I recorded a whole bunch of percussion. There's a track on a record called "You Moved Away," and for that one I just emptied the box of percussion, from broken tambourines to Keplinger metal pieces, and I did handclaps and stomps, and we recorded me brushing my clothing. Sometimes I'd do another pass with brushes on a snare drum through a Shure Level-Loc or some gnarly compressor. It was about trying to create a percussive orchestra "bed" without being too much.

MD: How you find a balance between playing parts that are satisfying as a drummer and still serving the song?

Jason: That is *the* loaded question. It's hard, because…look, man, I could be one of those drummers that works really hard at being a burning-chops guy, and have myself forward, being a bandleader. I really admire those guys; however, if I tried to do anything like that in my band, I would not be employed. It's not possible. I think some of that has to do with, dare I say, everyone's comfort level as players on stage. People don't want you outplaying them or overplaying them, so it's a chemistry or blend thing, right? Like, I can't show up to a wedding with my wife and wear a really loud pinstripe suit if she's just wearing black.

My role as a drummer, in terms of having some amount of facility and independence, is on a very sort of obscure level—to be as much of an "artisanal" drummer as possible. In other words, what I want to come through to the ears of other drummers is that there's some stuff happening, like, "Listen to that weird little pickup ghost note, or that left-foot hi-hat interjected in there," but I want it to be more felt than heard to the public, or the songwriter. But if I don't try to keep it

McGerr's Setup

Drums: Gretsch USA Custom in Satin Blue/Gray Duco finish
- 6.5x14 Solid Aluminum snare
- 9x13 tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 14x22 bass brum

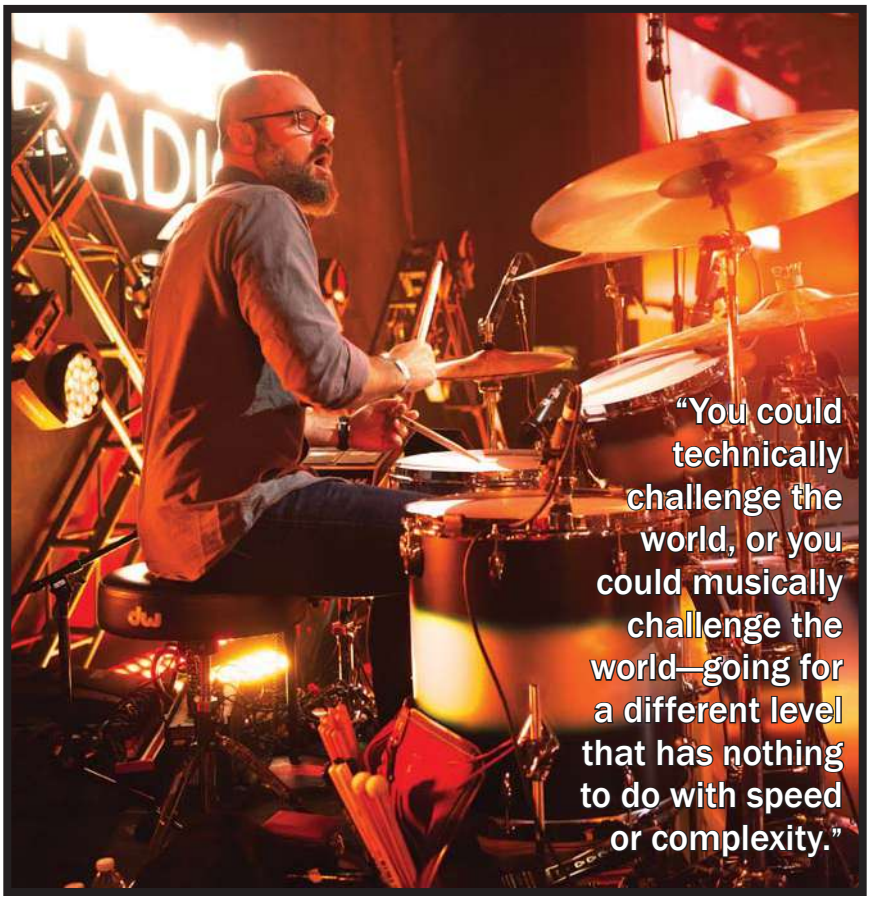
Cymbals: Zildjian
- 15" New Beat hi-hats
- 18" K Sweet crash
- 23" A Sweet ride
- 19" K Sweet crash

Sticks: Vic Firth HD9 Wood Tip

Hardware: All DW 7000 Series, except for a DW 5000 Turbo single bass drum pedal

Heads: Remo Emperor snare batter, Ambassador Coated tom batters and resonants, and P3 White Suede bass drum batter and Ambassador Fiberskyn front head

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX sample pad (occasionally Roland kick and snare triggers)


"You could technically challenge the world, or you could musically challenge the world—going for a different level that has nothing to do with speed or complexity."

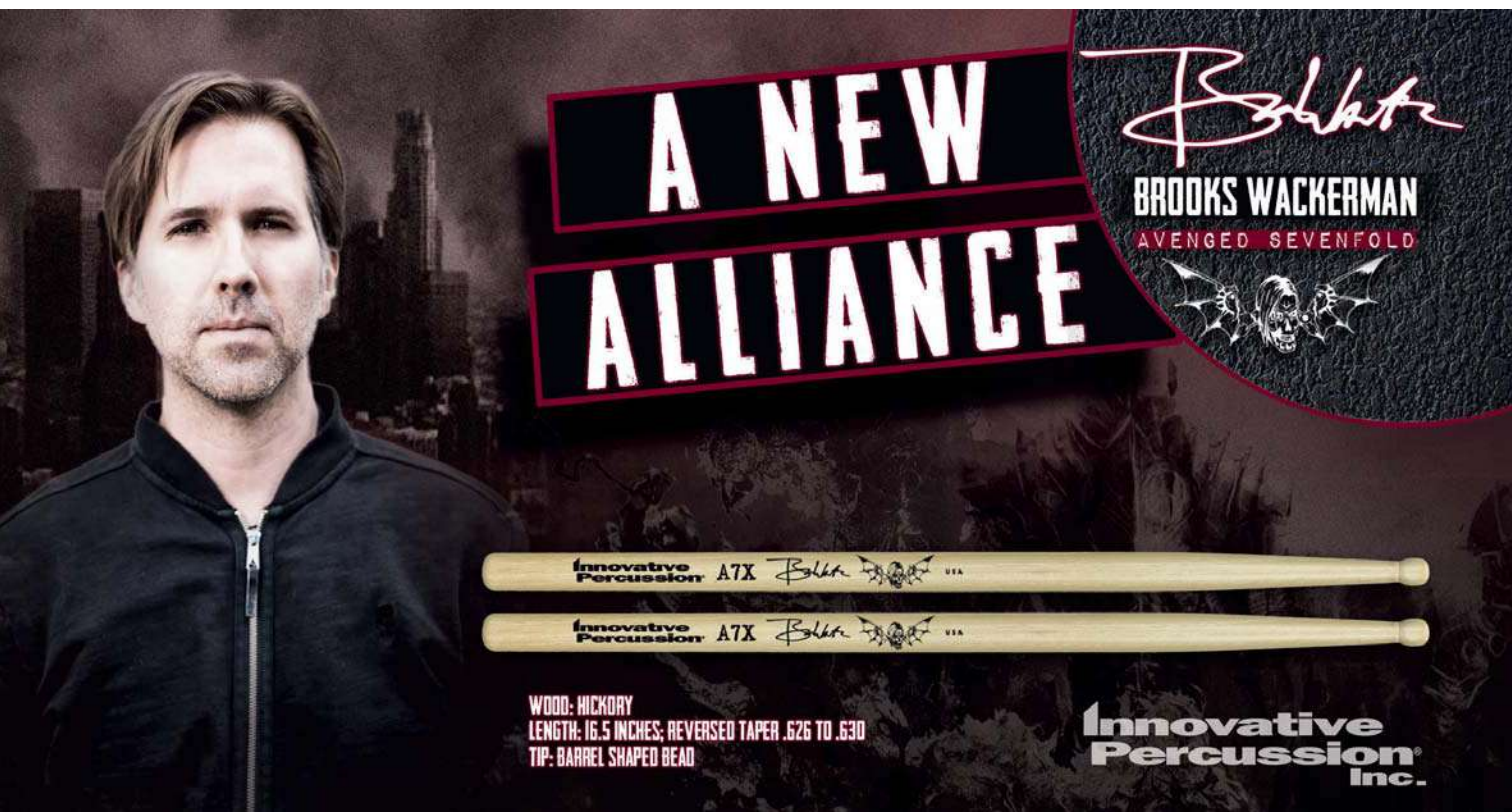
interesting and orchestrate parts that have layers of dynamics and groove, then I think I'd be a pretty sad panda. It's not my thing; I need to inject a little bit more.

That said, I feel like with each record there's one or two tracks where I get to pop a little bit more of a wheelie. But the majority of what I end up playing on Death Cab records [are] very supportive, simple parts. The depth of those parts to me is more about what's happening with the sticks and the feet, and what kind of resonance is going on with the stick, and how much tone am I getting—what is the *choice* of my drum sound? You could technically challenge the world, or you could musically challenge the world—really investigating tones and feel, how things are reacting to microphones and compressors, going for a different level that has nothing to do with the speed or the complexity of how you're playing.

MD: It's clear you've done a lot of work on technique and independence. Do you have any particular sources?

Jason: I studied with a guy named Steve Smith who lives in Seattle. He's the owner and founder of the Seattle Drum School. A lot of his curriculum is going to be in a book before too long. I'm really excited about that, as I feel it's truly applicable to having independence that works well in being a supportive backbeat drummer. A lot of it is just dotted-8th patterns and shifting 8th notes around. A lot of that stuff in my left foot comes from playing dotted 8ths in my left foot while playing time with the rest of the kit; that's where that "Grapevine Fires" hi-hat foot came in. I also studied with a Scottish drummer named John Fisher, who turned me on to a Scottish rudimental book called *The Maestro* by Alex Duthart. That book and Steve's curriculum program for independence are really…if you want to do everything that I do, just look in those two places, and you'll find all the pieces to the puzzle. I mean obviously I've worked out my own concepts and stuff in the last twenty years or more, but those are the pieces.

The culmination of my study of all the



Jason McGerr

Scottish stuff is that this is the first time I've abandoned matched grip, which I've used for thirty-three years—I completely set it aside in everything I've been doing and switched to traditional grip. It took twenty years of playing a pad and really trying to investigate what's going on with that stick position in the left hand for me to get comfortable enough to sit down and use [it] in a touring environment, and so far so good.

MD: That's a huge change. What's the reasoning?

Jason: Over the last ten years I've been feeling like, in touring life, you just end up where you can't help but be fatigued all the time with the jumping all over the country, or countries, and you just can't always sit down and be relaxed and have everything at zero. Sometimes you're just tired, and the body doesn't want to cooperate physically. So I think that over the years I've been edging towards more bad habits, maybe hitting harder than I should. I even went through a phase of bending beaters. I think from an outside perspective I don't look like I'm hitting hard enough to do that, but I was really hitting harder than I should have been.

Through some investigation in terms of trying to reel it in dynamically, I took a couple lessons with Dave Elitch, who was helpful in discussing efficiency, but it was playing traditional grip when I found I was the most relaxed. I had the thought of, *Well, if I just switch to traditional grip, won't every other part of my body relax the same way?* My bass drum foot lightened up, my overall sound and tone lightened up in the microphones, and everything else started doing the work for me. I used my switching to traditional grip as sort of a vehicle to bring everything down a little bit. Now I think that throughout the course of the next year or two of touring, it will all come back up again, but I wanted to reset my overall dynamic range.

It's been a real challenge over the years, finding a way to feel the same on a big stage outdoors, or in a giant hockey arena, as I do at home in my own studio. It's always a rude awakening to go from that environment, where I feel like I've got total control of musicality and dynamics, to like, jumping into a NASCAR and racing around the track. It's jarring. So like I said, coming out with traditional grip this time I think has limited me to a certain range of…not limited like I can't play my parts, but it just made me look at it from a different angle and have a different approach, which has been truly valuable. This far in, I needed that.

MD: So the grip change had nothing to do with injuries or fatigue?

Jason: No, I never had any problems, though my right foot was getting fatigued because I was just smashing the bass drum. I feel very good about my hands—they're healthy; I didn't switch to traditional because my left matched was bad. It was just more of an emotional change, just how to play differently. Matched grip has always been like, *Here are your hammers, here are your nails. Go out and build something.* [laughs] I can play both ways, but I've never had any hand issues that have been bothersome. I pride myself on being a pretty relaxed player, just so I don't run into that problem. I can't imagine that happening. Like, your job is in jeopardy because, what, you didn't investigate it? Hand pain is a real problem. That's what a lot of my students come to me for. Specifically, how to make sure that I'm not holding the stick too tight, and that I'm letting the stick do work. That's it, and I could go down the investigative path of hands, and I will, for the rest of my life.

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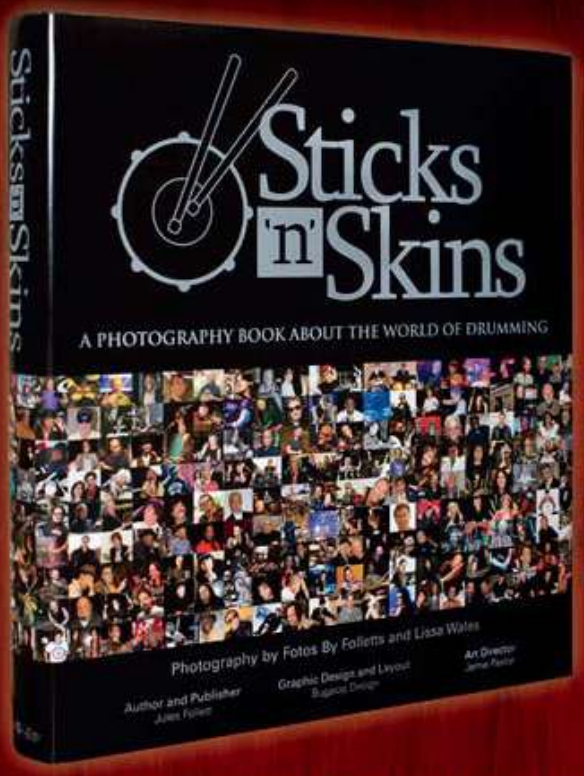
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A Unique Insight Into The Community of Drummers

Milford Graves

A new documentary on the drummer artfully reveals a player and educator who's long been uneasy with typical learning methods. But his commitment to musical communication and self-actualization has resulted in his being considered one of the most revered musical voices of our time.

by John Colpitts

Director Jake Meginsky's film *Full Mantis* about drummer, martial artist, teacher, gardener, and scientist Milford Graves begins with a quote, arranged like a short poem:

Look at the room downstairs
Look at the garden outside
Don't try to analyze it
Just take it in

Full Mantis contains no outside interviews, no expert testimony, no timelines or résumé-gathering for people curious about the legendary musician's life and work. After the opening quote we're presented with a nearly three-minute, slow zoom-out focused on a mirror framed by two marimbas in Graves' downstairs studio. Meditative music from his recordings plays on the soundtrack. In the context of other music biopics, *Full Mantis* is radical and uncompromising. Within its own frame, the film makes perfect sense; it's patient, informative, and deeply moving. As Graves himself advises us at the beginning, "Don't try to analyze it, just take it in."

If we follow this advice, we're met with a virtual parade of Graves' obsessions and passions, presented clearly and without comment. First and foremost, of course, are the drums and his playing. For a student of the instrument, it would be difficult to see and hear his powerful, complex rhythmic expressions and not be inspired. There's plenty of raucous and impassioned performance footage here to silence any doubters of his instrumental prowess. But alongside this archival material we're also introduced to Graves' love of gardening, his engagement in martial arts, his obsession with the rhythm of the heart, and his dedication to family and well-being.

The film is impressionistic and often mysterious, but as a portrait of a powerful and profound artist, it's hugely effective. Though the patient presentation of the material could initially cause viewers who are accustomed to modern quick-cut documentaries some anxiety, all is eventually revealed, and this writer walked out of a screening of the film feeling inspired to explore the drums and music in a different way, with a more open and receptive mind.

Graves was an innovator on the trap set during the early years of free jazz. He played with pianists Paul Bley and Don Pullen, saxophonist Albert Ayler, and many other of the genre's most important figures. He discovered early on that he had trouble providing for his family by exclusively playing gigs, so he explored other ways to make a living. He started teaching at Bennington College and was on the faculty there for nearly forty years, teaching a number of luminaries on the instrument, including percussionist Susie Ibarra and *Full Mantis* director Jake Meginsky.

When *MD* met with Graves at New York City's Metrograph theater to discuss the film, he was moving slowly. At a screening later he announced, "I've been healing so many people over the years, I gotta heal myself now!" Graves was a calm and open presence; expansive, funny, engaged, and fully present.

MD: What would you suggest to a drummer interested in traveling a more holistic and musical path?
Milford: I think the first questions I would ask a musician are, "Why do you play music," "What's the purpose of music," and "What kind of commitment do you have?" Usually when I ask someone [those questions], they have to think for a second. You may not realize it, but when people come to hear you perform, they're really saying, "Turn me on." What I try to do is experience either directly or indirectly what people from other cultures do.

You're really studying people. And this is my thing about conservatories right now—they don't teach about people. People get tight when they say, "Well, you know the audience wasn't hip; they didn't know what was happening." You can see some rock drummers, and the way they're hitting the drums, or their strokes—they're not really playing *music* on their drums—it's like banging. But the thing is that most people, they may take the banging over someone who's really getting so-called great aesthetics off the instrument. But the person who's getting all these great aesthetics, they're so cool that they don't put emotion into it. But if somebody's banging, the people love that! [The audiences] are looking

for something wild, something with some enthusiasm.

I had a great experience at the Big Ears festival this year with [pianist] Jason Moran. People were wondering, "Is that going to work?" I talked to Jason [before the set], and he's cool. But [during the concert] Jason all of a sudden stands up off the stool, takes his shirt off, and says, "I'm hot, man!" And I looked at him, and Jason got back down and took some sort of rattle or something and started bouncing it all off the strings on that piano, and [now] he wasn't that cool guy playing Monk for nobody, man! Jason got so emotional. And people noticed that! And I'm saying, "No, he got *possessed*, man." All that coolness went out the window. If I have any part of it, he's not going to be cool on me. You can still look conservative…but you're gonna get more animated, and then people feel that. When you get animated, people say, "They're feeling it!"

MD: What are some elements of a holistic drummer or musician?

Milford: It comes back to some really basic things for me. Taking care of yourself health-wise—that can mean medicine or shelter, or home building; a family. You're not just a musician who's going to study an instrument and then you go on stage and say, "Look at me, look at my technique, listen to my composition." No, it's more than that. If [the audience] can't feel the content of your composition, then they're not going to get it.

MD: The film captures a lot of your passions beyond the drums.

Milford: It's more than being a multidisciplined person, a polymath, or a Renaissance person for me. It's about experiencing what you have to go through to do the mathematics, or chemistry, or something like martial arts. For me martial arts is having a controlled discussion or debate among two human beings. It's the immune system; we have externalized our immune system.

A garden is not just to be some hip person—"Oh, I do gardening, man"—gardening just makes sure that at least at certain times of year I will get some food that I know is organically grown. I want to get some good greens in my body! It's a way of saying, "This is real out here." We must treat ourselves in a certain kind of positive way.

To me, that's the new musician. If I had to redesign a conservatory, you would get exposed. So if you went to any part of the planet, if you know a little bit about that culture, just as a performer you're going to be able to groove with these people—you're going to feel what they're about. Most people in most places I play out in the world, they come up to me and say, "I feel you! I feel you!" It's not about what my limbs are doing, all of these time signatures—it's nothing about that. "We gotta go back and feel this again!"

MD: Those complex elements are there, too, but the music transcends those things clearly. It's not like subdivisions for the sake of complexity.

Milford: It's not about being simple or complex, it's just about being true. Being true to the degree that you don't take yourself

Paradigm Shifts

Jake Meginsky, *Full Mantis*'s director and one of Milford Graves' long-term students, elaborates on the professor's teaching style.

One of the first great lessons I had was essentially the professor telling me to put the metronome away. He recorded my heartbeat, put it through his system, made some tracks of just the heartbeat, and said, "Just use this to practice." As a student you recognize right away that he's someone who's seeing you as untapped potential, and the potential comes from an emergence of your own voice.

Studying music, this is one of the big mysteries for people—how do you get a voice? You can do rudiments, and you can impress your family and your friends with speed, but you know in the back of your head there are certain people who have a voice and there are certain people who don't. And I think the beautiful thing is that the professor demystifies this for all his students. Having a voice comes from getting really in tune with who you are and what you are about, and digging deeper and deeper until you start to produce things that turn you on.

I came to him as a drummer looking to become a better drummer, but I think the kind of teaching that the professor does…he's changing the way you think rather than the way you play. And the way you play then comes from the fact that you're thinking differently. So it's really about changing paradigms in a very gentle and caring and loving way—but they're drastic and seismic paradigm shifts nonetheless. Once you're thinking differently, you're playing differently, you're expressing differently.

I know in my own journey as someone who makes music, this started to happen for me. I started to make things that I realized, *There's no one else who's made anything like this.* I think when you approach making music that way, the technique [results from] the drive to make something by starting to ask for what it needs. Rather than this other paradigm, which is that you need to master everything first, and when you're done with everything *then* you can see if you can make a personal statement or not. I think that's the secret that the professor allows the student into: that if you find a way into yourself deeply, you're going to go on a journey where everything you need is going to become available to you. And when it's not, you sit back, and you observe yourself and you observe nature, and you find a way back to that process.

as somebody special and people owe you something. It's not, "You must listen to me because I went through this ritual, and I'm smart and I know this and I know that. If you don't understand what I'm doing then you're not right." What the hell is that all about? What does it mean?

MD: You're obviously revered as a great teacher, and many of your students have raved about your methods. A lot of *Modern Drummer* readers are teachers. I wonder if there was a way you could touch on your philosophy of teaching?

Milford: This is where we have to bring culture in now. We've got to bring ethnicity in, and we have to bring a timeline in. I was always a little ambitious kid. My parents were basically from the South—Virginia and South Carolina. At the time my parents came up, this country did not present opportunities for African Americans. My parents didn't come up with any kind of academic background, but I was a kid that wanted to know more about the so-called academics. I wanted to be an aeronautical engineer without knowing what an aeronautical engineer was! I just knew that I wanted to build airplanes. So I finally convinced my parents to buy me a model airplane kit. I got the model airplane kit—it was disturbing because I could not understand the instructions. I was on my own. And I was in a neighborhood where they didn't send the best teachers. So I said, *If I ever got a chance to help people out, I'm not going to allow them to go through what I went through.* So I started to teach myself. I went to the library.

I'm going to teach in a way that is beyond a paycheck. There's got to be a simple way of teaching. I thought, there are two things I have to do. First, I have to simplify how you teach something. I have to break it down to the most simplified form. I want to decode something that's in a language that makes it just for the few, and really break it down.

The second thing I have to do is to make sure that I'm not physically intimidating these guys. I don't want to play a superiority role: "I'm the teacher, and you're the students." We are all equal. I have a little more experience maybe than you, so I'm going to impart this experience to you.

If I can do anything to help out and improve this society, put my two cents in, that's what it's about. If you're a teacher, that's a responsibility we have.

Inner Secrets
Gergo Borlai

by Ilya Stemkovsky

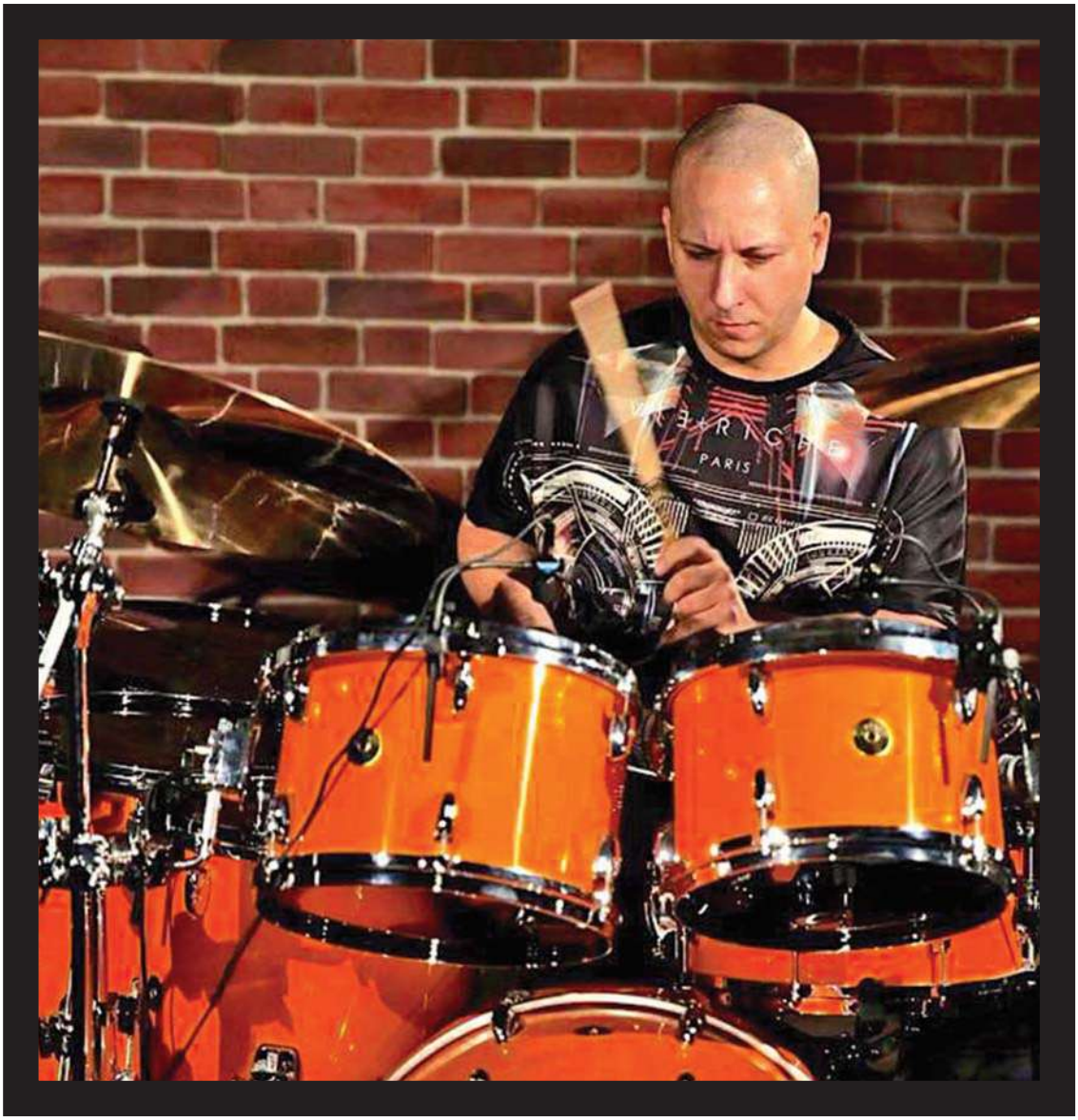
Oh, he can shred—boy, can he shred. But this L.A.-by-way-of-Hungary drummer with rock and fusion greats like Tony MacAlpine and Al Di Meola has visions well beyond technique for its own sake—his ultimate goal is to analyze, understand, and apply.

It's not every day that we hear about killer fusion drumming coming out of Hungary, but Gergo Borlai is doing his best to change that. The internet has made the world a smaller place, and Borlai ate up all the jazz and rock he could as a youngster, getting knocked out by Harvey Mason and Joe Morello, just as kids in the States have for so many years. What emerged was a player of exceptional power and technical facility.

And Borlai has no shame about playing a style that still gets a bad rap. "Fusion is the perfect music to play," he says. "It is many music styles that centralize into one style. Isn't that great? It's just unfortunate that people have less interest in this type of music—in seeing improvisations, long solos, spontaneity, and a deep presence on stage without 'acting.' I don't think it will change soon."

Maybe fusion won't be dominating tomorrow's radio, but it's still being made at a high level by the genre's leading lights. Borlai has worked with artists like Al Di Meola and Hiram Bullock, and is a member of the new group ARC Trio, featuring bassist Jimmy Haslip and keyboardist Scott Kinsey. Their new, self-titled album is a brilliant showcase for Borlai's musicality and powerhouse fusion drumming skills, and it's a testament to his abilities that he sounds just fine alongside the big-time guests on a few of the tracks, who are none other than Vinnie Colaiuta and Gary Novak.

Those two legends also helped inspire Borlai's upcoming solo album project, *The Missing Song*, where the drummer pays tribute to some of his major influences by playing in their styles. And now, after moving to Los Angeles, he's as busy as ever. Along with his online course, *Practice with Me*, and a stacked studio and touring schedule, Borlai is establishing himself as a clinician to catch. One look at his YouTube presence on drum festivals and master classes will send you to the practice room for self-reflection, and have you questioning what's in the water in Hungary.



MD: Talk about growing up in Hungary. Did the internet break down the walls and give you access to all the great music out there, or was it still a case of things not getting to certain parts of Eastern Europe?

Gergo: Many years before the internet, in Hungary, the only chance to listen to good music was from Western cultures. Either [be] part of a tight clique who smuggled LPs, or [wait] for the weekly jazz radio broadcast [so we could] record what they played onto tapes. I was lucky because my parents were working at the Hungarian National Radio station, both as sound engineers, so they had opportunities to bring things home.

I learned to use my ears very early. And I got a special visual imagination about the musicians, their equipment, and of course the music. When I started to play drums, I was three years old. When I first used the internet, I was twenty years old. So there were seventeen years in between, when I had used my ears and practiced by imagination. Can you imagine when I saw Vinnie [Colaiuta] for the first time in a video? I was fifteen, and it was incredible! My second drum teacher had a huge VHS collection, and he was the only person at that time who had drum videos. We're talking about the early to mid 1990s.

MD: Who were the drummers that inspired you then, and what records meant the most in your formative years?

Gergo: When I was three, my father played me Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" with the great Joe Morello. Dad had a hobby band, so they had a very poor drumset. I sat down and I started to play the legendary 5/4 groove instantly. Of course, without ghost notes, fills, etc., but I played it. And during the next couple of weeks I practiced that groove every day, all day, to find the solution to how I could improvise on it.

Later my dad showed me the song "Chameleon" by Herbie Hancock, with Harvey Mason. That one also shocked me, so I did the same. When I got my computer with internet, the first thing I learned was how to search for drummers and their videos or live records. And the first was Vinnie.

I remember when I found Steve Holmes' HouseOfDrumming.com. This guy made a website specialized for Vinnie. I'll never forget when I downloaded a two-minute-long video for two days to see Vinnie and how he played. It was phenomenal!

Looking back, when I was younger I didn't really listen to Hungarian music. It was mostly American jazz, fusion, and rock.

Miles, Herbie, Coltrane, Stanley Clarke, Weather Report, Mahavishnu, Zappa, Hendrix, etc. Those pioneers were my real music teachers.

MD: What did you do early on to develop your technique? You certainly have excellent facility with your hands and feet.

Gergo: First of all, we had neighbors who hated drums. So I practiced a lot on pillows with no rebound, and that's what gave me fast singles and muscles quite early. Second, my dear mom gave me total freedom to do what I wanted, so I practiced as long as I needed. When I got my first practice pad kit, I set it up super uncomfortably to get more power, forcing myself to be more precise between the pads. I would play continuously without any pause for hours.

I was listening to music all the time, but I never transcribed any solos. Of course I played licks, but I never wanted to use full phrases. My goal was to create my own. As for my foot technique, when my mother finally bought me my first serious drumkit, it had a single pedal [set at a] maximum spring tension. I had no idea how to change the tension, and I thought that was normal. So I started to play with that pedal, and I tried to imitate a double pedal as much as I could. I practiced lots of 16th and triplet notes, and my feet became strong. To this day, I set all my pedals to maximum tension.

MD: How do you approach the higher-profile gigs like Tony MacAlpine or playing Zappa's music, when so many great drummers have preceded you?

Gergo: My dream was to play with the people I was listening to when I was young. Since leaving Hungary and moving to Los Angeles, I have played with many of them. It wasn't my goal to copy the drummers before me. My focus is the music and to be musical.

The main reason to listen to my heroes was the reactions inside their bands. And I wanted to learn as much as I could, in case I got the chance to play with them. I listened and analyzed a lot, so I could figure out what kind of playing they liked. I'm talking mostly about jazz and fusion music. Tony MacAlpine is a different subject. His music is quite fixed and orchestrated, but he gives me total freedom. Of course, I'm playing those famous drum fills that the songs need, and what people like in his hits, but besides that, I'm doing what I'm doing. I'm trying not to stray from his style. It's all about taste, I think.

"I've been working in studios since age twelve. I grew up as a first-take guy. My first six years of studio work was with analog tape."

MD: What's your philosophy on practice?

Gergo: The most important thing, in my opinion, is patience. It's even more important than to practice technical skills. The other thing is to actually really practice in the practice time. Don't play—*practice*. It's all about filtering the mistakes and creating new ideas by accident or conceptually, or transforming others' ideas.

When I teach in drum camps, my main lesson is to teach the participants how they can practice, and lots of young people have no idea about that. Some of them are waiting for a miracle or a word that will change their life. There's no secret. And also, everything is on YouTube. Everybody can instantly find what they're looking for. The only thing they can't find is the time to practice. That's why I made my online course, *Practice with Me*, which is about building your practice technically and physically. The lessons are around twenty minutes each, because no one has the patience to watch something five to eight hours long.

When I'm in my studio, I pretty much do the same thing. I'm playing easy things without any thinking, just to warm up. And then I start trying to play things I haven't played before, risking everything. That's what practice means to me.

MD: How do you feel about clinics in 2018? Are people receptive?

Gergo: Good question. For many years, people were receptive. These days, I'm not really sure. It depends on the country. I've done clinics in some countries where it was a new thing, and I was one of the first to do clinics there. It was such an honor. But honestly, for me these days it's more about the performing again. Of course there are some clinicians who are more educators, which is good, but for a drummer like myself, it's more about the performance.

It also depends on the audiences. Once I did a clinic for around fifty students in a music school, and there were only two drummers. So I didn't talk about quintuplets or polyrhythm. But I could talk about how to develop a good rhythm section, or the communication between the soloists and the drummer, or about the humility of playing behind a singer. Of course, people love to see chops. If they call someone who has chops, they want to see it closely.

MD: What do you see as clinic trends for the future?

Gergo: What the focus of drum clinics in the future will be, I can't say. The world is so fast these days; every day a new amazing kid drummer comes along, and they get an endorsement instantly. I was thirty when I got my first endorsement contract. But musicality has faded into the background. I miss the spontaneity, the humility of music. But the world is different, so I have to accept that. I like the drum camps, though. I like to work with people and build something note by note for hours and see them sweat.

MD: For your upcoming solo album, *The*

Borlai's Setup

Drums: Gretsch USA Custom
- 6.5x14 wood snare, Dunnett Gergo Borlai signature model
- 8x12 tom
- 9x13 tom
- 14x14 floor tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 18x18 floor tom
- 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Paiste
- 14" Formula 602 Classic Sound Edge hi-hats
- 20" Formula 602 Classic Thin crash
- 18" Formula 602 Classic Paperthin crash
- 22" Formula 602 Classic Thin crash
- 18" PST X Swiss Medium crash/18" Signature Thin China (stack)
- 24" Formula 602 Classic Medium ride
- 22" Formula 602 Modern Essentials China
- 4.5", 5.5", 6", 6.5" 2002 Cup Chimes

Heads: Remo, including a Controlled Sound Coated snare batter; Ambassador X Coated tom batters (studio) or Emperor Vintage Clears (live); Powerstroke P3 Coated bass drum batter

Sticks: Vic Firth American Classic 5A and 55A

Hardware: DW 9000 Series boom stands, additional cymbal holders, throne, snare stand, 2-leg hi-hat stand, and double bass drum pedal

Accessories: SlapKlatz drum damper gels, Drum Wallet snare dampener (studio), JH Audio in-ear monitors, QSC TouchMix-30 32-input digital mixer with Logic ("to record myself in my studio"), GEWA SPS drum cases

Missing Song, what inspired you to play in the style of your heroes?

Gergo: My main idea was to make a tribute album about nine living American drummers who inspired me. I always wanted to make an album where I'm playing in my heroes' style. Why not? It's not difficult to figure out who they are: Billy Cobham, Terry Bozzio, Kirk Covington, Dennis Chambers, Vinnie Colaiuta, Steve Gadd, Peter Erskine, Keith Carlock, and Gary Novak.

I set up my drums very similarly to what they used on my favorite album of theirs. I tuned them as they did. I played as close as possible to how they played. The "missing song" means it's the missing song that I imagined they would play. For example, there's Zappa's *Joe's Garage*. I wish he had more songs on that album. So I wrote one. Of course, my touch is different. And why would I use a lot of 32nd notes with double pedal in the Keith Carlock song if he never did? Why would I use two Chinas in the Vinnie song if he didn't on *Joe's Garage*?

It was a great journey during the recording. I couldn't imagine that I would write a tune where I only used a crash, a ride, and a hi-hat.

MD: Did you learn something from the process?

Gergo: I was thinking a lot about what this album could mean for a new generation. Well, it's partly music history. Tons of young people have no idea where certain styles of playing come from. First of all, they don't care. It's okay—they want to do what they want to do; they want to go further. But I don't think it's a good idea to associate a style to a drummer who's only a third-generation copy of the original.

MD: How do you prepare for studio work? Are early takes the best?

Gergo: I grew up as a first-take guy. I've been working in studios since age twelve. I've recorded more than five hundred albums as a drummer, producer, orchestrator, sound designer, music director. I'm pretty well versed with every aspect of studio work. It depends on my role at the time. There are many situations when the first take is important, but of course, often, repeated takes have their benefits. I always want to be mindful and tasteful. If it's needed, I'm able to help create grooves, fix structures, or improvise. I came from jazz. My first six years of studio work was with analog tape. So there were many situations where I had to be quick and play my best to be able to use the first take. I also learned to read music quite late.

MD: Do you chart everything?

Gergo: I love to communicate with the musicians, and I pretty much learn the material with my ears. Fortunately I have perfect pitch, and this capability gives me good memory. But sometimes I have situations where it would be impossible to play without charts.

MD: How do you deal with different live rooms and changing monitors and backlines?

Gergo: Well, I grew up in Hungary, where I played thousands of concerts with the worst wedges and backline kits, or just simply without any monitor system. Since I play mostly in good technical conditions these days and use ear monitors, these problems don't really exist anymore. But no matter what disastrous technical problems I'm facing, I don't panic.

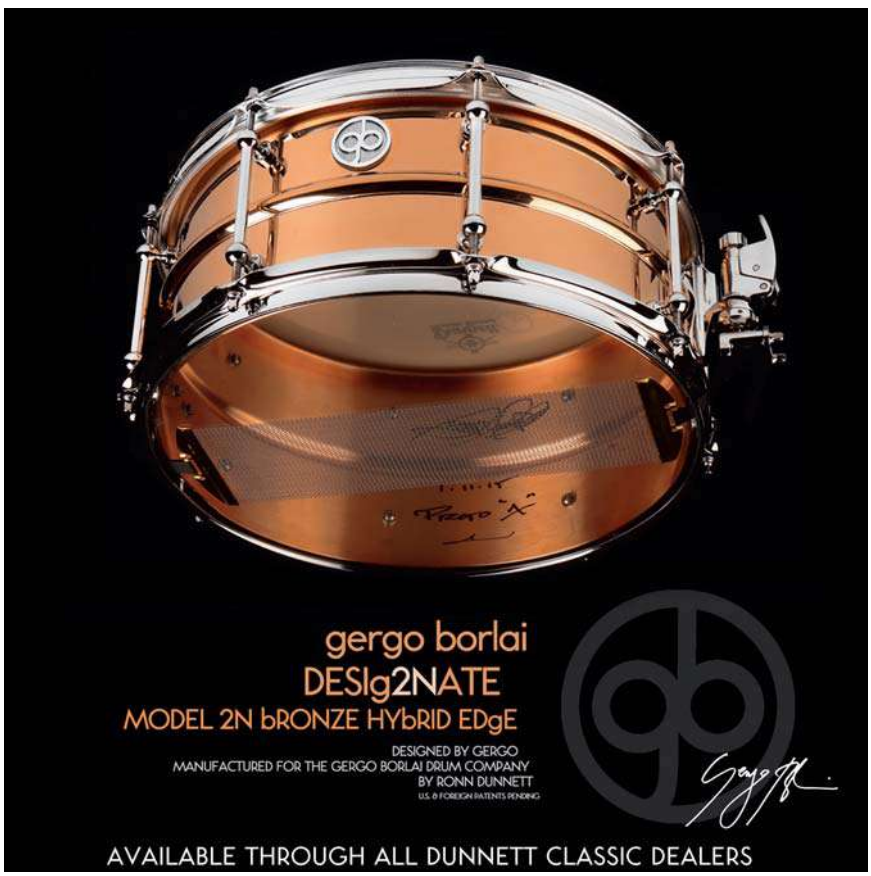
MD: What's in your future?

Gergo: First of all, I want to practice more than ever, just to better myself. I also want to direct my focus more on the actual music, and I want to create something new. I want to discover how I can instantly play what is in my head. I love writing songs, designing sounds.

I also want to be a better sound engineer. *The Missing Song* is the first album I mixed by myself. In the future I want to be braver and more experimental with my music and with the mixing. But besides that, I'm still a dreamer. I still want to play with Sting, Jeff Beck, McLaughlin, Herbie. Also, it would be great to play in a band like Foo Fighters or Nine Inch Nails or Filter.

MD: And where does drumming go from here? Do we return to organic sounds? Or are dance music and hip-hop here to dominate for a while?

Gergo: Very good question. Organic sounds will always exist. Electronic or dance music is still the future, but at the same time, the updated retro also works well. Just like what happened with drums—everybody used the traditional sizes for forty years, and then the long toms and kick drums came out. In the 2000s, long bass drums, super short toms. Now companies are selling the traditional sizes again. A similar thing can happen with the music. People who are born with natural talent for their instrument will have to use it. And I hope the time will come soon when the audience will appreciate genuine, organic music again. It's worth it.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The *Modern Drummer* Guide to Reading Rhythms

Part 2: Whole Notes, Half Notes, and Quarter Notes

by Miguel Monroy

In Part 1 of this series we discussed the anatomy of the staff and various types of notes and rests that you'll encounter when reading music. This time we'll learn how to play and rest for whole-, half-, and quarter-note durations. Be sure to use Part 1 as a reference as you progress throughout the rest of this lesson.

If you have a metronome, now is the time to break it out. A great starting tempo for these exercises is around 60 bpm (beats per minute). If you don't have a metronome, try using the second hand on a clock—which ticks at a rate of one beat per second—or simply practice the exercises at a moderately slow tempo. Let's dig in!

Counting Out Loud

As drummers, one of our jobs is to keep time. With that said, nothing helps you internalize the time quite like counting out loud while playing. That raises the question, "How do you count out loud?" If there are four beats in a measure, you'll be counting out loud to "four" on each pulse while playing the notation. When you perform, music doesn't stop if you lose your place. By learning to count out loud now, and silently later, you'll always know where you are in the music even if you make a mistake.

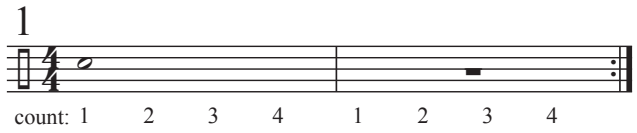
Duration

The notes we're going to learn in this lesson are meant to sustain for a specific duration of musical time. However, most drums can't sustain note durations in the same way that instruments like a piano or guitar can hold out a note. That being said, it's quite common for percussion students to sing the notes for their full duration when learning to read. Simply singing "dah" for each note's duration is a great place to start. However, you can also play the notes on your practice pad or drum and count out loud for the full duration of the note instead of singing.

Whole Notes and Whole-Note Rests

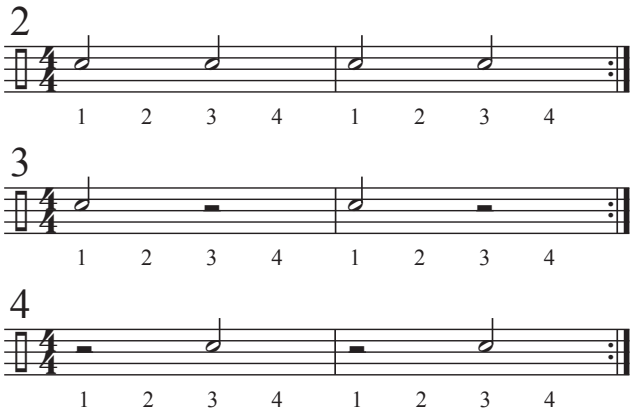
Whole notes and whole-note rests last for four quarter-note beats. Exercise 1 is in 4/4, which means that there are four quarter-note beats per measure. If you were playing a whole note while counting each measure out loud as "one, two, three, four," you'd strike the drum on beat 1, and it would last for the entire duration of those four counts.

Let's practice this by counting "one, two, three, four" out loud along with a metronome and hitting a drum or practice pad on count "one" of the measure. If you have a metronome or want to tap your foot, try singing a syllable such as "dah" for the length of all four beats as well. A whole-note rest lasts for the same amount of time, except that you'd remain silent for the length of four beats instead of playing on beat 1. We'll practice both playing and resting for a whole note, one after the other, in the following two-measure example.



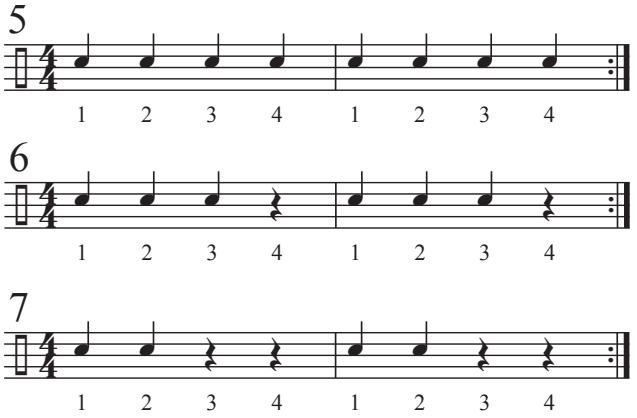
Half Notes and Half-Note Rests

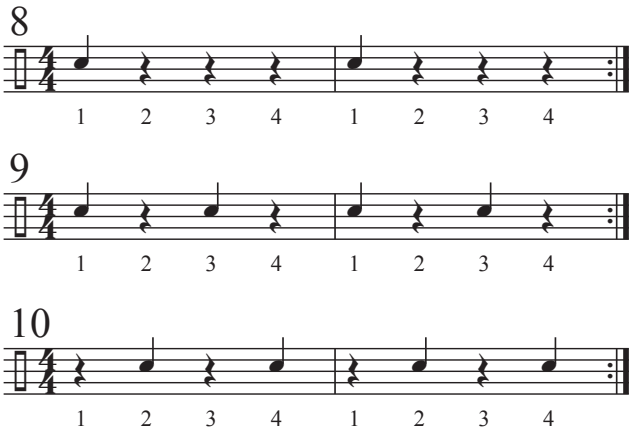
Half notes and half-note rests each last for a duration of two quarter notes. We can fit two half notes, two half-note rests, or one of each in a measure of 4/4. Let's practice playing a few combinations of half notes and half-note rests. Count out loud at all times, or tap your foot along with a metronome while singing the duration of the notes. Remember that while you're silent for a half-note rest, two full beats will pass from the metronome, your foot, or your counts.



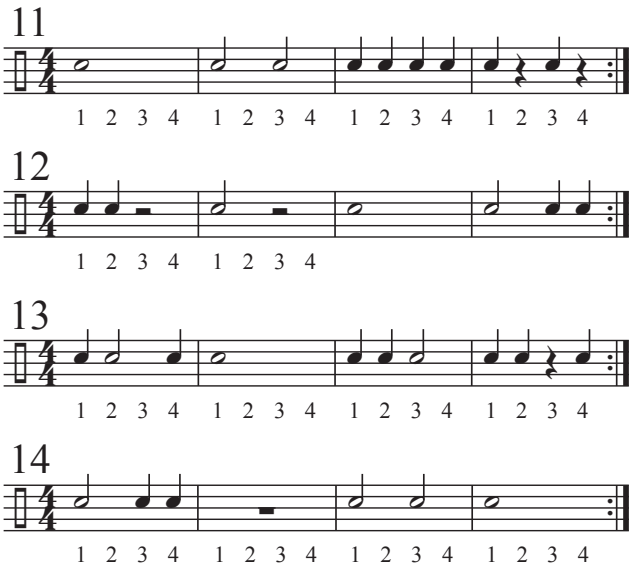
Quarter Notes and Quarter-Note Rests

In 4/4, quarter notes and quarter-note rests last for one beat or pulse. This opens up many musical combinations of notes and rests within a 4/4 measure. Furthermore, you'll notice that for every beat in the measure, you'll now be playing or resting. Continue to tap your foot, use a metronome, and count out loud.

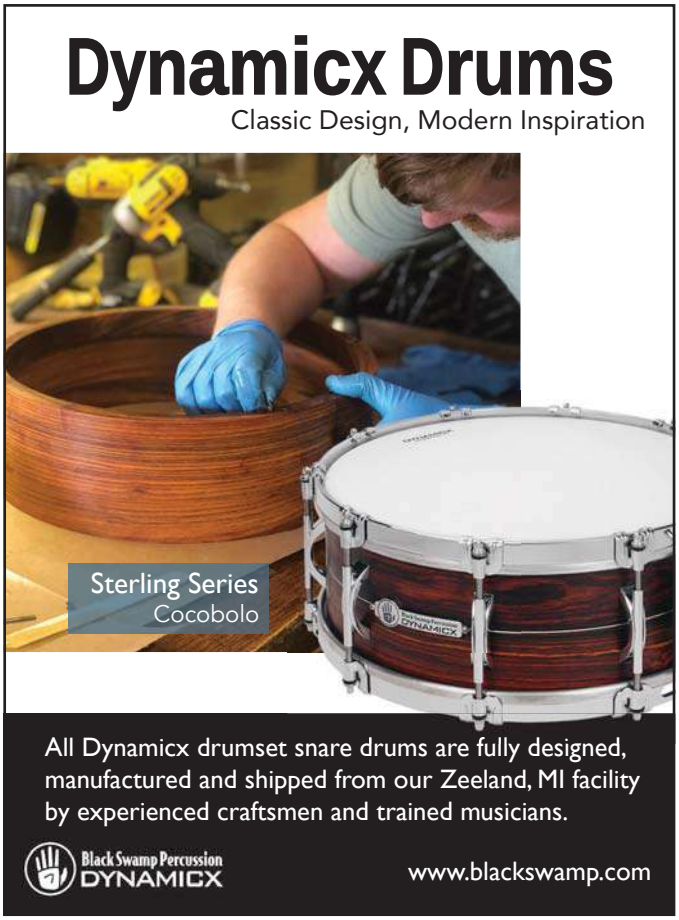




Putting It All Together

Now we'll combine the notation that we've learned so far. Remember to take these exercises slowly, use a metronome to help you keep time, and count out loud when playing the following examples.

Feel free to create your own exercises with any combination of these notes, as long as the patterns add up to four quarter-note beats per measure. Remember, music notation is divided into measures. The time signature will always tell you how many beats are in each measure. And no matter what, all time must be accounted for within that measure with the correct number of either notes or rests.

Next time we'll dive into reading and counting 8th notes and 8th-note rests.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Pataflafla Builders and Shifters

Adding Syncopation to the Essential Rudiment

by Bill Bachman

I first discussed pataflaflas in the May 2015 issue, in an article titled "Pataflafla Builder," and the material in that lesson was later adapted into my latest book, *Rhythm & Chops Builders*. This month we're going to revisit the concepts from that lesson and shift pataflaflas around to different parts of the beat to create syncopated patterns. Doing so can be helpful for developing hand techniques and a great way to develop timing and comfort as the figures shift around each pulse.

The pataflafla is one of the few rudiments in which each hand plays a totally different motion instead of playing identical parts that are offset rhythmically. The leading hand employs what I call the Moeller whip-and-stop technique, and the secondary hand uses what I call the no-chop flop-and-drop technique, both of which are hand motions that are vital to a drumset player. Playing a rudiment with the weaker hand leading usually involves a mental switch, but with the pataflafla there's a physical learning curve as well.

When examining the pataflafla, you'll find that the leading hand plays two low taps that immediately precede an accent on the 16th-note counts of "1-&-a, 2-&-a, 3-&-a, 4-&-a." When practicing this figure slowly, you'll have plenty of time to play the three consecutive notes (starting on the "&" of each beat) as a tap, an upstroke, and a downstroke using the wrists. However, at faster tempos there's not enough time to play the upstroke without tension or a rhythmic gap before the accent. So we need to replace the wrist motion with a Moeller whip-and-stop stroke that originates in the forearm. By employing this stroke, you'll have time to stop the stick low to the drum after the accent and before repeating the process.

This motion will be played in the following manner. First drop the hand and stick with the fingers open for the first tap on "&." Then lift the forearm while allowing the hand to drop down, and let the stick bump the drum for the second tap (a Moeller upstroke). Finally, throw the forearm down with the wrist limp for the whipped accent. Immediately after the accent's impact, grab the stick to stop it from pointing down right next to the drumhead. This way the stick is set up to repeat the series of three notes starting from a low tap height. When practicing, exaggerate the lead hand's whipping technique by playing light taps with the fingers and using large forearm lifts.

The secondary hand plays the rhythm "1-e-a, 2-e-a, 3-e-a, 4-e-a," with the accent on the "a" of each beat. At slow tempos, playing a high accented downstroke (on "a") immediately followed by two low taps works well. But at faster tempos there's not enough time to stop the stick after the accent. Here's where we'll have to employ the no-chop flop-and-drop motion so that the accented note can simply drop down to the lighter taps without the stick stopping. I call it the no-chop flop-and-drop because you want to avoid using your fingers to add velocity and presence to the taps after the accent. The tap strokes will not be as low as usual, but they will sound light as they drop down in height sequentially. Because the taps flow out of the accent, avoid hitting the accent too hard. However, be sure to attack the accent from a high stick height in order to get the most out of it.

In this lesson we'll play pataflaflas with just the leading hand, then with both, then with just the secondary hand, and then with both again before repeating. It's a good idea to practice this with each hand on a different surface to make sure there's no change in each hand's motion. Play each exercise with a metronome, tap your foot, and count quarter notes out loud. Your voice acts as another limb to coordinate, and your ability to count will leave you with better time and groove.

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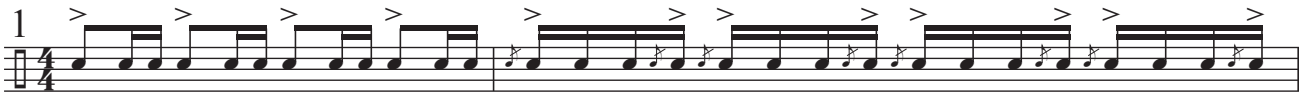
Moeller whip-and-stop

1

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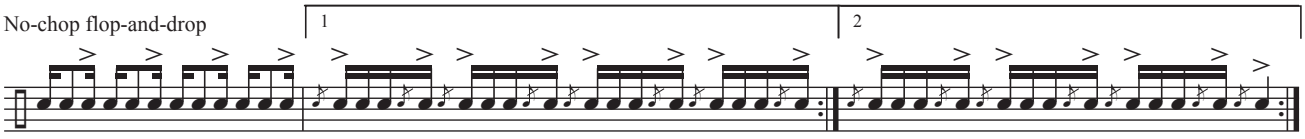
No-chop flop-and-drop



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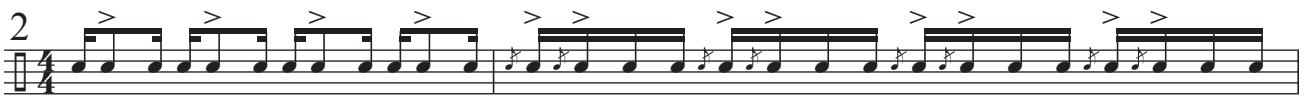
R R R R R R R R R R R R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L

Repeat exercise with reversed sticking

Moeller whip-and-stop

2

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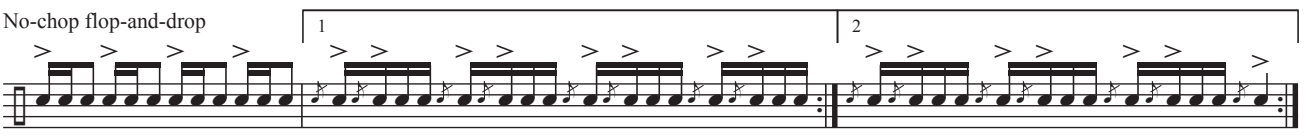
No-chop flop-and-drop



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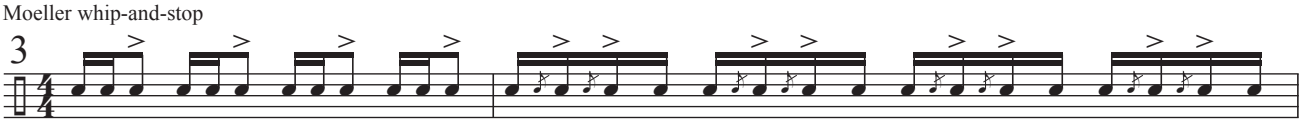
L L L L L L L L L L L L r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L

Repeat exercise with reversed sticking

Moeller whip-and-stop

3



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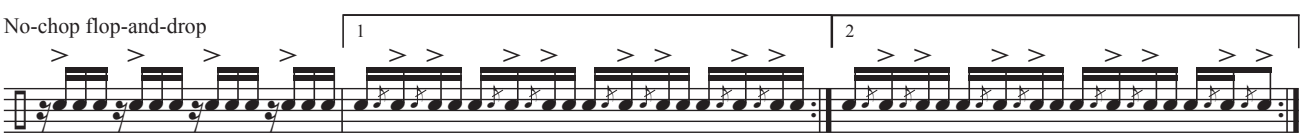
No-chop flop-and-drop



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R R R R R R R R R R R R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R

Repeat exercise with reversed sticking

Moeller whip-and-stop

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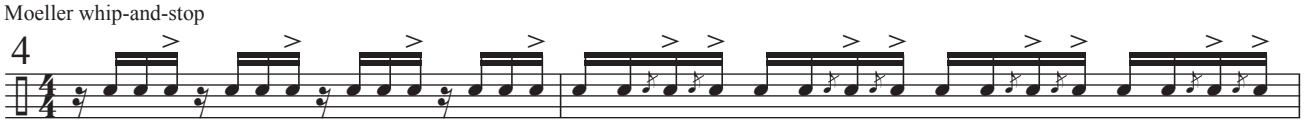
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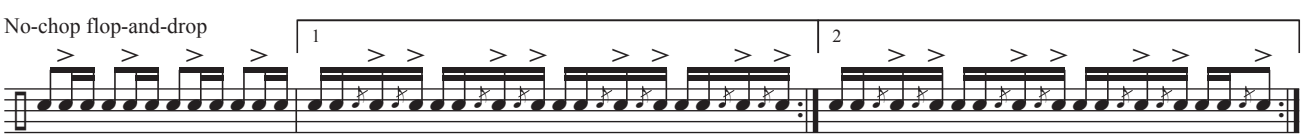
No-chop flop-and-drop

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L L L L L L L L L L L L L L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L

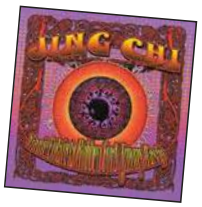
Repeat exercise with reversed sticking

Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician, the author of *Stick Technique* and *Rhythm & Chops Builders* (Modern Drummer Publications), and the founder of drumworkout.com. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons, visit billbachman.net.

Polyrhythmic Bass Drum Workout

Challenging Your Endurance and Time

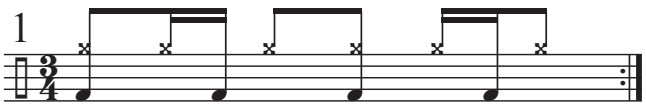
by Daniel Bédard



Vinnie Colaiuta's playing on the jazz fusion group Jing Chi's self-titled 2002 record features a feast of amazing phrases and outstanding rhythms. Recently I was listening to the album's second cut, "Stan Key," and a figure Colaiuta played on his China cymbal at the 4:23 mark caught my ear. He plays a four-over-five polyrhythm while keeping a steady 4/4 beat with his other limbs. I loved the sound of this rhythm and felt that I could build on it to develop some bass drum coordination. The examples in this lesson are based on Colaiuta's polyrhythmic phrasing, and I highly recommend checking out the track.

To start exploring this concept, let's play a four-against-three grouping between the kick and hi-hat.

1



By playing the snare on every second beat, we can create an interesting 6/4 groove. This phrase might give you a hard time at first, so remember to practice it slowly. Pay attention to your bass drum and snare placement, as you don't want to play any flams between the two voices.

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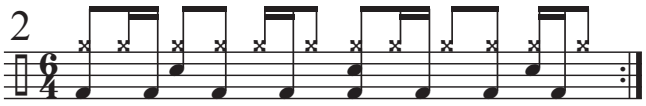
Once this pattern feels comfortable, try playing double strokes on the bass drum to exercise your foot. Let's start with the same four-against-three pattern while incorporating doubles on the kick.

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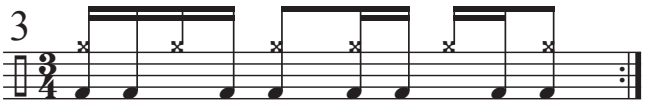
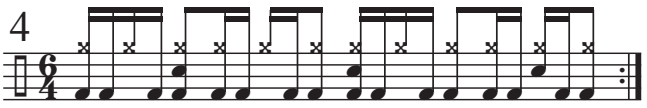

When this example feels solid, play the snare on every other beat, again creating a 6/4 groove. At faster tempos, I find that this exercise is a good muscle workout for your bass drum foot.

4



Now that we've established the concept, we'll apply it to other polyrhythms, such as Colaiuta's four-against-five

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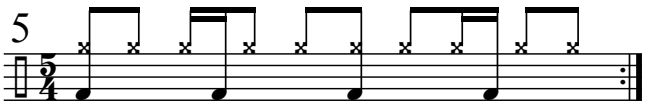
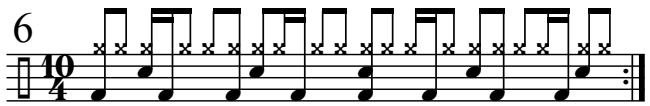
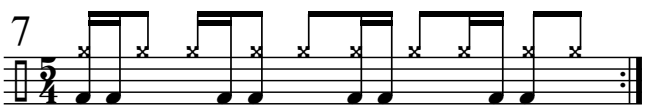
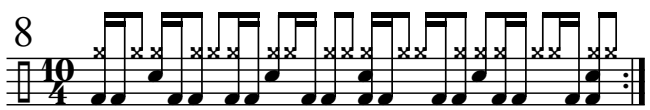
rhythm from "Stan Key." Let's try this new grouping with the bass drum and hi-hat first.

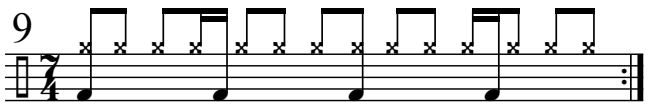
5

Now let's add a snare backbeat.

6

In Exercise 7, we'll play the same four-over-five polyrhythm between the hi-hat and bass drum while incorporating double strokes on the kick.

7

Now let's add the snare.

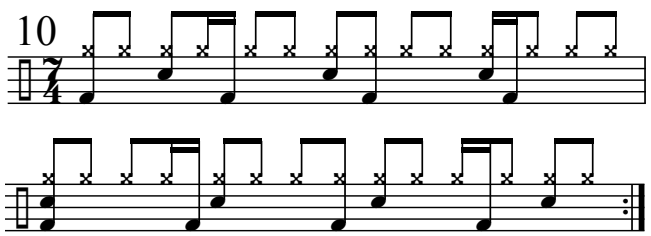
8

Let's also apply this concept to a four-over-seven polyrhythm. First we'll play this grouping on the hi-hat and bass drum.

9



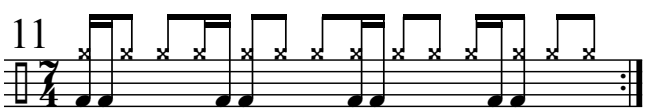
Here's the pattern with a snare accent on every other beat.

10



Let's incorporate double strokes on the bass drum, first with isolated 8th notes on the hi-hat.

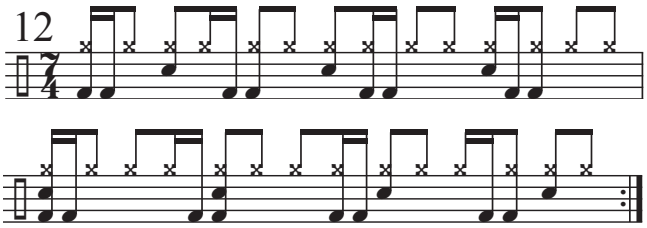
11



And finally we'll add in the snare-drum backbeat.

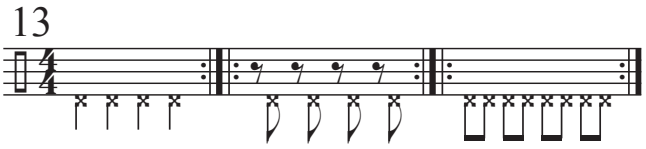
Rock 'n' Jazz Clinic continues on the next page

12



One you're comfortable with the previous exercises, try playing each pattern on the ride cymbal with the following hi-hat foot patterns.

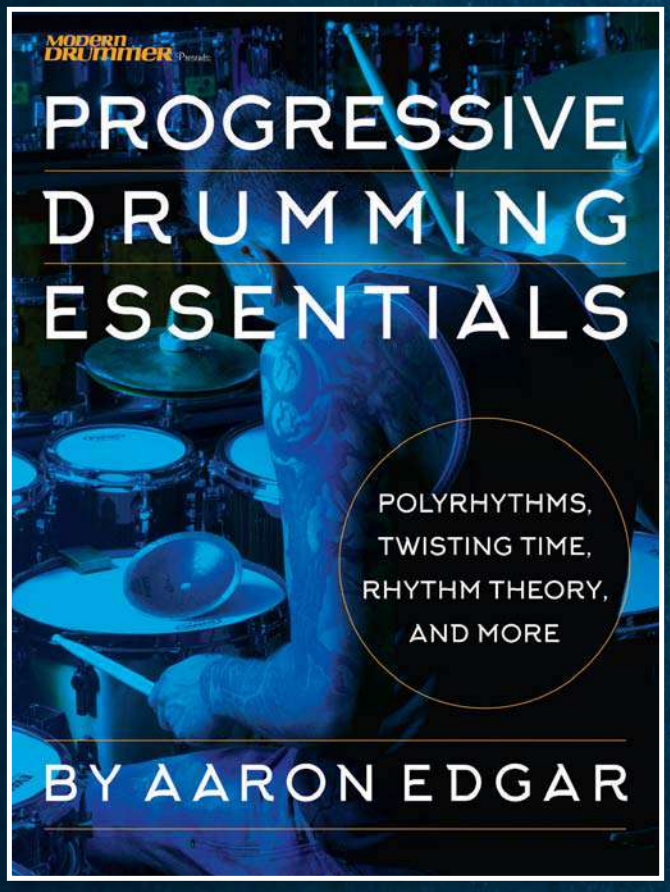
13

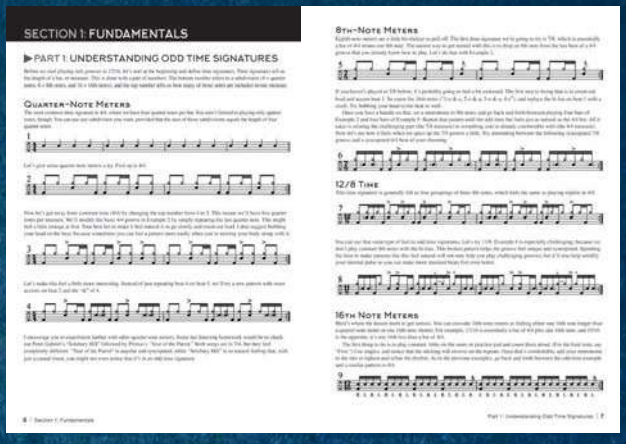


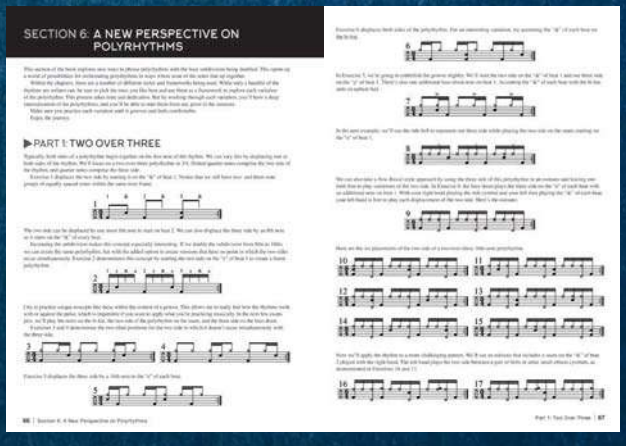
As you can see, we can develop a lot of interesting rhythms and exercises using polyrhythms. And because the concepts in this lesson were first inspired by a brief Vinnie Colaiuta excerpt, remember that you never know where inspiration might come from—you should always keep your ears open.

Daniel Bédard is a Montreal-based drummer, educator, and clinician. For more information, visit danielbedarddrums.com.

Play More PROG







Progressive Drumming Essentials is an expanded collection of articles originally written for *Modern Drummer* magazine. The book progresses from the fundamentals of odd time signatures all the way up to super-advanced concepts like implied metric modulation and displaced polyrhythms. For the most adventurous modern drummers out there, this is a must-have!

Order your copy now at **www.moderndrummer.com**

A Different Approach to Flams

Developing Technique in a Modern Metal Context

by Aaron Edgar

Last month we used flams to create contrast within common time signatures. Flams are some of my favorite rudiments to apply to the drumset—you can create incredibly expressive phrases when you vary the width between a flam's grace note and primary stroke, from tight and precise to open and loose. You can also vary your dynamics and experiment with the rudiment's orchestration around the kit. In this lesson we'll experiment with the flam's width, condensing its spacing down to a unison note, or flat flam, and using the new rudimental pattern to create syncopated, blast beat–style drumset applications.

Before we start, let's check out some important flam rudiments that we'll be incorporating into a practice routine. It's beneficial to practice these initial examples in a few different ways. First, play them on a pad or snare, and accent every flam. This is an easy interpretation for this rudiment, as the accents give your sticks momentum to utilize within the rest of the figures. The main challenge here is to play all of the unaccented notes at a consistent volume.

Next practice the six patterns without accenting the flams, while making sure that every stroke other than the quieter grace note maintains the same volume. In this variation you want the flams to sound smooth, consistent, and nearly monotone as compared to the other notes.

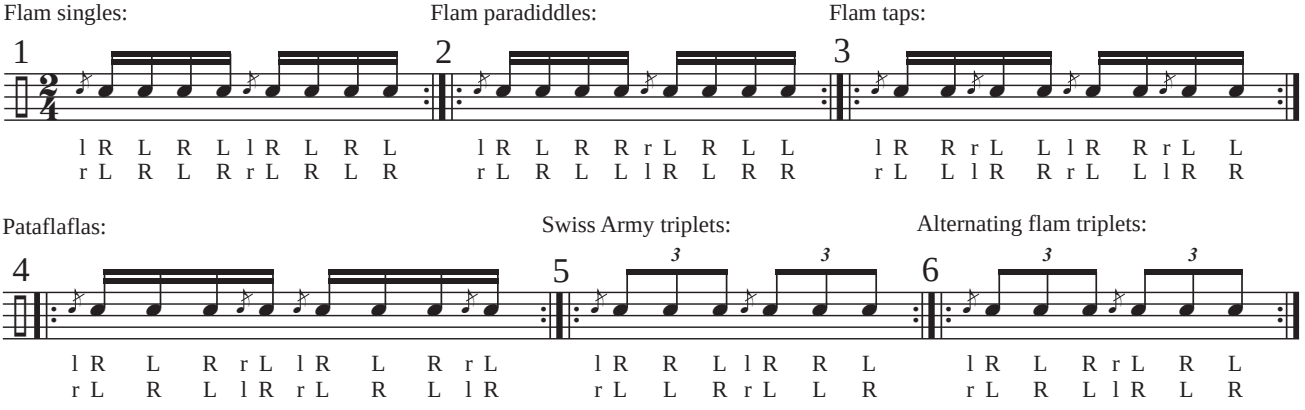
Once you've warmed up with the accented and unaccented variations, try playing the leading note of each flam on a tom. This orchestration sounds especially interesting with the pataflaflas and flam paradiddles. Voicing flams in this way will add another element of arm motion to the exercises, so it will likely take some additional practice to keep all notes as dynamically consistent as they were without the extra movement involved.

The Flam Rudiments

Exercise 1 demonstrates flam singles, and the same hand will lead each flam on both beats 1 and 2. In Exercise 2 we'll play flam paradiddles, and the flam will alternate from a left- to right-hand lead between beats 1 and 2.

Exercises 3 and 4 explore flam taps and pataflaflas, respectively. To play the pataflafla cleanly, spend time meticulously practicing the placement of the alternating flams. If the phrasing isn't clean, the dynamics may suffer as well.

In Exercise 5 we'll play Swiss Army triplets, and in Exercise 6 we'll play alternating flam triplets. The flams are led with the same hand when playing the Swiss Army triplets, while they alternate when playing flam triplets.


Flam singles:
Flam paradiddles:
Flam taps:
1
2
3
l R L R L l R L R L
r L R L R r L R L R
l R L R R r L R L L
r L R L L l R L R R
l R R r L L l R R r L L
r L L l R R r L L l R R
Pataflaflas:
Swiss Army triplets:
Alternating flam triplets:
4
5
6
3
3
3
3
l R L R r L l R L R r L
r L R L l R r L R L l R
l R R L l R R L
r L L R r L L R
l R L R r L R L
r L R L l R L R

Musical Applications

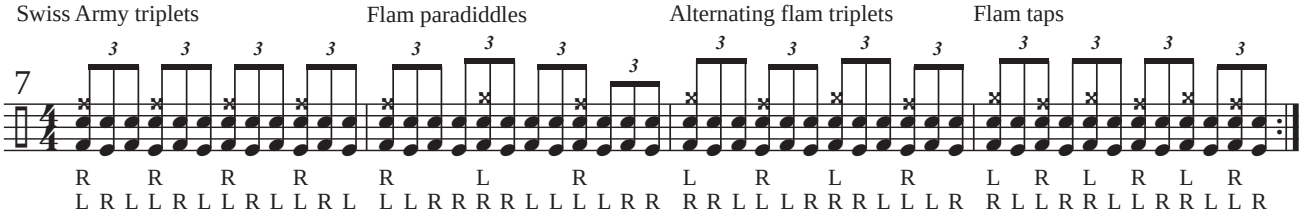
Once you've warmed up with the previous examples, it's time to dive into the exercises. These next sequences are written as blast beat–style rudimental drills. We'll condense the width of each flam to become unison flat flams that are played on the snare and cymbal stack. Each exercise attacks four different flam rudiments. The phrases flip their stickings on repeat, resulting in eight total variations per example. Also, both exercises incorporate polyrhythmic phrases. Be sure to review last month's lesson if the polyrhythmic groupings trip you up. In this context, having a right- and left-hand cymbal stack is ideal, but you can use the hi-hat or any voice on either side as long as each hand gets its own sound source when playing the notated cymbal figures.

Work through these exercises slowly with just your hands at first. Concentrate on the mechanics of each motion before adding in the feet. You could also play the sequences on a practice pad without the bass drum and experiment with the spacing between the grace note and primary stroke of each flam as well. These are

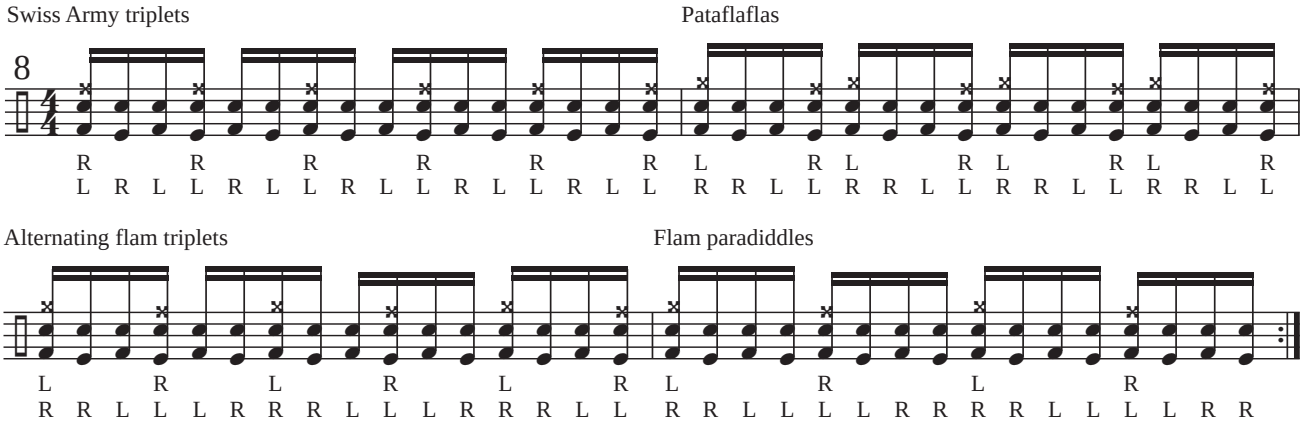
equally great hand exercises on their own.

Also, pay attention to your dynamics on the snare. You want the snare to sound unaffected by the cymbal pattern—try to maintain a monotone dynamic, as mentioned earlier. It's difficult to keep the tone of these varied sticking patterns consistent while also incorporating a cymbal and double bass, but that's the challenge.

In Exercise 7 we'll play a phrase that's based on an 8th-note triplet subdivision. In the first measure of Swiss Army triplets, the right hand plays the primary note of the flam on a cymbal stack before moving immediately back to the snare for the second stroke of each beat. In the second measure of flam paradiddles, the first flam lands on the downbeat, the second lands on the second partial of beat 2 with your left hand, and the final flam falls on the last note of beat 3 with your right hand again. This results in a three-over-four polyrhythmic phrase. Bar 3 begins with a left-hand lead with alternating flam triplets. The last measure of the phrase incorporates flam taps within 8th-note triplets, creating two three-over-two polyrhythms. The sticking reverses on each repeat.


Swiss Army triplets
Flam paradiddles
Alternating flam triplets
Flam taps
7
R R R R R L R L R R R L R L R L R L
L R L L R L L R L L R L L R R R R L L L L R R R R L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R

Exercise 8 employs the same approach as Exercise 7, only this time within a 16th-note subdivision. The Swiss Army triplets in measure 1 and alternating flam triplets in measure 3 outline four-over-three polyrhythms. The pataflafla pattern in measure 2 is my favorite of all the examples, but it's also arguably the most difficult to execute cleanly. Concentrate on the positioning of each voice, and make sure they're aligned. Bar 4 concludes with flam paradiddles, and the sticking reverses on repeat.


Swiss Army triplets
Pataflaflas
8
R R R R R R L R L R L R
L R L L R L L R L L R L L R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L
Alternating flam triplets
Flam paradiddles
L R L R L R L R
R R L L L R R R L L L R R R L L R R L L L L R R R R L L L L R R

Each bar from these sequences can function as a musical embellishment or groove within an extreme metal context. Don't be too concerned with speed in these examples. Blast beats are generally meant to shred, but don't sacrifice productive practice just to achieve faster tempos.

Treat these as technical exercises to build your ability to place flams anywhere within a given subdivision, regardless of the sticking. Mastering the transitions between each measure will help improve your ability to unleash these figures at will. And experimenting with the width of your flams can result in a more thorough understanding of the rudiment and an ability to express its spacing purposefully.

Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. His latest book, *Progressive Drumming Essentials*, is available through Modern Drummer Publications.

Warm-Ups and Mobility Guidance

Part 1: Stretching Facts and Myths

by Brandon Green

Two of the most common questions I'm asked—both at my fitness facility and by fellow drummers—is how to warm up and increase mobility. Without a doubt, being prepared for the activity you're about to do is of utmost importance. Being prepared helps to ensure that you approach the activity with precision and control, and it reduces the risk of injury.

So, what is the best way to warm up so that you prepare your muscles for contractions and prevent injury? The pat response to this question has been to stretch. Let's explore this concept and consider some facts that support an argument that stretching might not be the best approach.

Muscles Do What?

Muscles are designed to produce mechanical tension, which is a type of force that helps to boost contractions in a rotational environment around joint systems. This force is often referred to as torque. The better we are able to produce torque, the more accurate and precise our muscles act. This means that the more control we have over our muscles and related systems, the better we will be able to drum.

The Myth of Stretching

Let's unravel the concept of stretching. When a typical person considers stretching, he or she envisions moving a limb into a deeper-than-normal position and holding it for a period of time. During this stretch, there's a sensation of pulling in the muscle. Once that tension is released, an increase in motion is expected. In the world of fitness, this is what's called "passive stretching."

Most of us think of a stretching muscle, ligament, or tendon as an elastic band. We stretch these muscles believing they are being elongated. When we stop stretching, the muscles have been warmed up, become more pliable, and will move more efficiently.

But movement isn't just about muscle. All tissue is responsible for movement. This includes muscle, bone, fascia, tendons, nerves, and ligaments. And most of those tissues have less than 1 percent elastic (elastin) qualities and are 99 percent collagen (a non-stretch protein). So if our movement systems are made up of 99 percent non-stretchy material, what exactly are we stretching?

Several scientific studies have established that passive stretching can decrease force production of a muscle, making it less capable of accomplishing what it was designed to do. This can mean injury is more imminent.

How Is Mobility Improved?

After we put mechanical stress through our muscles, our mobility qualities change. One of the proposed theories for this change is referred to as post-activation potentiation (PAP). Think of PAP as a muscle memory stick. Imagine not practicing for two weeks and then trying to play some rudiments. It most likely feels a bit awkward. But then if you rest for fifteen minutes and return to the same rudiments, everything feels easier and more controlled. PAP is a likely explanation for this. PAP (also referred to as muscle memory) can produce an increase in skeletal muscle contractions when preceded by a similar pain- or fatigue-free activity. Simply put, after you use your muscles, your muscles get better at doing the thing you just did, as long as you didn't burn them out completely.

If you can increase muscle contractions around a joint, your muscles will get stronger and be more capable of pulling you into greater positions. This is how we enhance mobility and retain that improved mobility.

So What About Stretching?

I'm not suggesting to stop stretching, especially if it's clearly helping you. There are a multitude of studies suggesting forms of stretching can help to relieve pain and discomfort. What I would recommend is that you not stretch intensely before you perform on the drumset—there's an inhibitory response that can come from more extreme forms of stretching that can degrade your muscles' ability to perform. This could increase the risk of injury. If you find stretching helpful, I suggest doing it when you're finished playing.

Now What?

Over the next few months, we're going to explore mobility and warm-up strategies using the PAP phenomenon. We'll zoom in on skeletal muscle contractions versus putting your joints into risky positions. We'll also explore short-term potentiation versus long-term potentiation in an effort to find new ways to make improvements in performance last even longer. Until next time!

Muscle and exercise specialist **Brandon Green** is the founder of Strata Internal Performance Center, and is the owner of the drummer-centric biomechanics and fitness website drum-mechanics.com.

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John Bonham's First Ludwig Kit

Chasing Down the 1969 Thermo-Gloss Behemoth

by Billy Harrington

A historic piece of gear, whether it's a legendary studio console or a grimy old drumhead, can act like a time machine. Collectors often set eBay alerts for elusive snares, or we'll travel far and wide just to catch a glimpse of a famous drumset stored behind a glass wall. One of my pursuits led me to the U.K. to chase down information on one of the most historic sets of drums in rock 'n' roll history: Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham's first Ludwig endorsee kit from 1969.

The Carmine Connection

By December, 1968, Led Zeppelin had embarked on a North American tour as a support act for several groups, including Long Island, New York's Vanilla Fudge. It wasn't long before the twenty-one-year-old Bonham forged a friendship with Fudge drummer Carmine Appice. A fan of Appice's drumming, Bonham also fancied the shining Thermo-Gloss maple Ludwig set that Carmine was using on that tour. A phone call from Appice to Ludwig was all it took to land Bonham his first and only drum endorsement. "I said, 'I think they're going to be big,'" Appice recalls. "Understatement of four decades? Yes." A few weeks into the tour, Bonham's Appice-inspired Ludwig kit showed up.

The first documented appearance of the kit (as a four-piece configuration) is from a four-day residency in Boston beginning on January 23, 1969, at a venue called the Boston Tea Party. The drums made it through a grueling 200-plus-date tour that went into the summer of 1970 and included the recording sessions for the band's second album. Bonham would debut his second Ludwig kit—in green sparkle—at a show in Reykjavík, Iceland, on June 22, 1970, effectively putting the maple-finish set to rest for good.

The Second Owner

With Bonham's second Zeppelin kit working the band's remaining dates in 1970, the maple behemoth would lay dormant for a couple years until a young Scottish drummer named Colin Fairley noticed them in the Bonham household. Fairley, who was dating John's sister Deborah at the time, inquired about the retired drums, and all it took for Bonham to pass them on was a payment of five pounds.

Shortly thereafter, Fairley and his band String Driven Thing played the Marquee Club in London. On stage sat this newly acquired Ludwig kit, with its worn maple finish and oversized dimensions being instantly recognizable to any Bonham disciple. One such fan, Paul Thompson of Roxy Music, was in attendance that night.

The Great Paul Thompson

Thompson was among many drummers who became an instant Bonham fan after dropping the needle on Zeppelin's self-titled 1969 debut album. But it was actually Bonham who noticed Thompson inside the lobby of West Hollywood's infamous Hyatt House (aka the Riot House) when Roxy Music stopped there for a spell while on tour

in the U.S. in 1975. "Here he was standing in front of me, telling me he liked my playing," Thompson recalled. "I was on the ceiling." Later that day, Thompson was invited up to Zeppelin's suite, and he flew with them to their next show on their private Boeing 720 plane, the Starship.

Despite a hectic schedule with Roxy Music, it was around this time that Thompson managed to purchase three of Bonham's maple drums from Fairley. He eventually completed the set, minus the LM402 Supraphonic snare, which Fairley insisted on keeping.

Getting Some Questions

In addition to their historic performance history, Bonham's first maple drums are also unique because of their finish and configuration, which were somewhat rare in the late '60s. Details about this particular drumset have been endlessly debated, so Thompson agreed to allow me to look over the drums in person to finally put some of these questions to rest.

Even though Bonham received his drums in January 1969, it wasn't until 1970 that Ludwig began officially advertising the option to customize orders. Now buyers could assemble a kit in any configuration from the available sizes. They could also choose from an array of traditional and custom finishes, including the Thermo-Gloss option. Although this was the first time the Thermo-Gloss finish appeared in print, Ludwig had begun offering a clear maple finish as early as 1967, originally advertised with the Jazzette configuration. As was standard at the time, all of the drums in Bonham's order had 3-ply shells with maple reinforcement rings and clear interiors.

The depth of Bonham's bass drum has been a source of heated debate and was my main reason for meeting up with Thompson. In the late '60s, Ludwig offered 14"-deep bass drums exclusively, though they did have the capability for 16", as seen in the 1964 catalog for concert drums. Carmine Appice explained in a 2009 interview that before he had a Ludwig endorsement, he used a 15x26 Leedy & Ludwig bass drum in his early setup with Vanilla Fudge. Was it possible that upon ordering his first set of Ludwigs, Appice simply requested a bass drum with those dimensions? And did that size continue over to what Bonham ordered? After carefully measuring Bonham's bass drum from bearing edge to bearing edge, Thompson and I concluded that it is in fact 15" deep.

It should be noted that although Bonham ordered two bass drums, they were only used together for a handful of shows in the U.S., and this was after he had done many shows with Zeppelin with just the single 15x26.

Although the story has been told that Bonham received an identical copy of Appice's kit, the toms are slightly different. Appice's main order included a 12x15 rack tom, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and an additional 14x22 used as a floor tom. Bonham's kit included a 12x14 rack tom (a custom size unavailable in the 1970 catalog), 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and an additional unused 9x13 rack tom.

Back when Thompson first saw Bonham's kit under Fairley's ownership, the 12x14 tom had been cut down to a 10" depth, with the reinforcement ring removed and put back into place. The original lug mounting holes had been filled and hidden underneath lug casings as well. These alterations were professionally done by Roy Webster's London drum shop, Percussion Services. The drums also received a touch-up to the lacquer finish.

Another point of interest: While the 9x13 and 16x16 drums have internal mufflers, the 12x14 and 16x18 were never drilled for them. Is it possible that, at the request of Bonham, no mufflers were added to those drums since they were special-order items? That question has yet to be answered.

Special thanks to Paul Thompson for his hospitality and generosity during the writing of this article.

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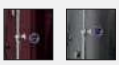

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Rupp's Drums
Denver, Colorado

It was always a goal of Alex Simpson's to be featured in *Modern Drummer*, though not necessarily as the owner of a drum shop. "I imagined being like Taylor Hawkins, on the cover," says Simpson. But fate had slightly different plans for him. At the relatively tender age of twenty-six, Simpson bought Rupp's Drums, where he shopped when he was growing up and worked as a sales manager before heading to New York City to make a go of it as a session drummer. With the potential of more session work in Los Angeles, Simpson planned to relocate but never reached his destination. On the cross-country trek from New York to L.A. in late 2017, a pit stop in Denver to visit family for the holidays turned into a permanent stay when Simpson heard Rupp's was for sale. Several months later, he was the owner. Simpson spoke with *MD* about the challenges he's faced so far, and his plans moving forward.

When I decided I wanted to buy the store, I called a colleague whose rehearsal studio business I managed when I lived in Denver. I didn't know where to start. She said you write a business plan that [the banks] cannot ignore. I shut myself in for about two weeks and wrote a fifty-page document with everything from how the store would be stocked to how I'd staff the place to what kind of money we were going to make. I shopped it around to twelve different banks. Some of them laughed me out the door, some of them took me seriously, and we whittled it down to the ones who would take me all the way to the SBA [Small Business Association] loan submission phase.

With customers, I haven't felt like I've had to prove myself because of my age. I was a sales manager here and built my customer service chops and my customer base. With manufacturers, I've absolutely had to prove myself. Even though I was ordering from them on a regular basis and speaking to them about stock and selling their product, that alone wasn't enough to immediately build an instant trust relationship as an owner. I was a little bit surprised to learn that they wouldn't just immediately say, 'Okay, we're going to keep doing business as usual.' I had to prove that I can pay bills—prove that I can at least continue ordering the amount I ordered before.

"I've always had the business bug," Alex Simpson says. "I've always had the entrepreneurial vibe. It's kind of what you have to do if you're going to be a gigging professional drummer. I always thought that if I never did anything with it, I'd regret it. That was one of the reasons I bought the store.

"There's a list of fifty or sixty store improvement projects that I have going," says Simpson. "There's no aspect of this store that exists that I don't have an improvement plan for. I've got a five-year plan; I've got a ten-year plan."

One of the biggest changes Simpson made after buying Rupp's Drums was restaffing. "I completely rethought the entire process," he says. "I brought in what is essentially my dream-team staff. I've been slowing down, making sure everyone's trained correctly. We have a vintage and used acquisitions specialist who doesn't just buy and sell, but repairs and restores."

When Brad Telepo owned the store during the previous fifteen years, there wasn't an owner on site. Brad lived in California, and he relied heavily on a general manager. I thought, *If I'm going to buy this store, I'm going to be a hundred percent hands on. I'm going to be the face of the store.* The store hadn't had a face for fifteen years. The fact that you can go into the store and talk to the guy who owns the joint—and have a relationship with the owner versus a salesperson—is massive. People love that. I've been the owner and general manager on site every day, taking on both those workloads. It'll be a while before I'm ready to let loose and turn over the management reins to someone to take care of that stuff. I've got a couple of guys on board who I'll probably groom for that.

We've got a pretty old-school customer base that was built by Bob Rupp when he owned the business [1984–2003]. There are also a lot of younger guys [around] my age who've been rallying around the store. They're the next generation of professional Denver drummers. We have a solid number of people who are hobbyists. Maybe they work in oil and gas; maybe they have a start-up tech job in Denver. They play in their basements, and they want the nice gear. They know what's out there. They can afford it. That's a huge part of our demographic. And we snag a lot of new customers from lessons. We've got a couple of guys who teach every day on staff. We send a couple of guys out to do free presentations for the local high schools. So we have a younger crowd whose parents we work with closely.

I've been a pretty stressed-out guy, with the weight of having nine employees, having all these bills to pay, and having to pay back this loan. That weight is constant, and there's no getting rid of it. But every single day something happens that's rewarding. We've done fairly well, so my comfort level as far as cash flow—as far as how healthy the business is—is solid. That's one less thing to worry about at night. The lights are on, and we're making a little bit on top of that. That's all I can really ask for.

Interview by Patrick Berkery

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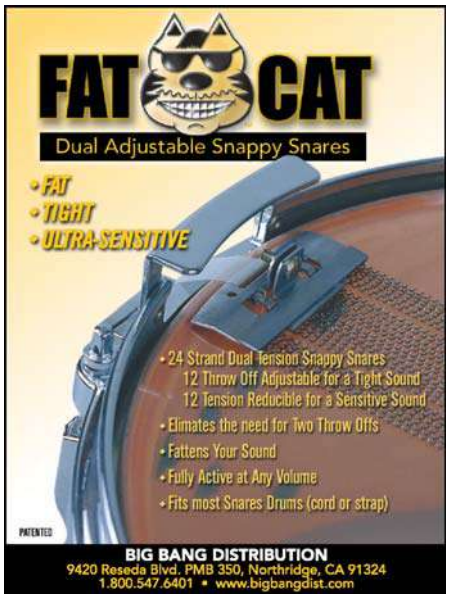
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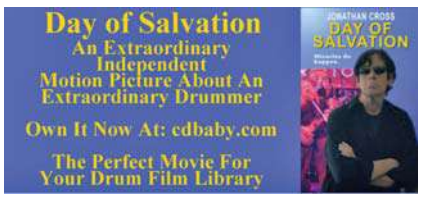
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CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS

Spin Cycle *Assorted Colors*

A group that's greater than the sum of their top-notch parts.

Spin Cycle is led by drummer **Scott Neumann** and sax player Tom Christensen, and features guitarist Pete McCann and bassist Phil Palombi. Each has extensive sideman credits, but here they join together to focus on their own thing. Spin Cycle's second album is grounded in straight-ahead jazz, yet it is exploratory, moody, and an overall solid listen. Check out "Possum Dark," with its laid-back jazz feel, in which Neumann peppers the beat and prods the soloists to greater heights. Then there are the ways he builds off the bass pulse on "Roots" and brings in brushes or subtle funk as needed. While there's variety in the songs, a cohesive group sound emerges through the solid tenor playing of Christensen and McCann's notable support and solo forays. Neumann's melodic playing involves just the right amount of color and drive where it counts. (spincyclemusic.org) **Martin Patmos**

Benito Gonzalez, Gerry Gibbs, Essiet Okon Essiet *Passion Reverence Transcendence*

A heartfelt, burning pays homage to a piano hero.

While his peers were still stumbling through garage riffs, a thirteen-year-old Gerry Gibbs organized a "McCoy Tyner cover band" with bassist buddy Essiet Okon Essiet. Fast forward four decades, and the two—now jazz notables—have reunited to pay tribute to the piano icon once again, aided by dynamic pianist Benito Gonzalez. Nine McCoy compositions are featured, in addition to Coltrane's "Naima" and three originals, one each contributed by the trio members. Out of the gate, Gibbs drives hard to the edge on "Fly with the Wind," setting the tone for this high-octane affair. Gonzalez channels McCoy with crashing, broad chords and staccato machine-gun runs while Essiet's commanding upright sound pumps support. Gibbs lends "Just Feelin'" a funky edge and spearheads a sweaty, up-tempo swing on "Rotunda." "Festival in Bahia" offers the drummer some spotlight; he launches a fierce solo over a vamp in seven with sharp, articulated speed. No coasting here: Gibbs and company give their all. (Whaling City Sound)

Jeff Potter

Larry Goldings, Peter Bernstein, Bill Stewart *Toy Tunes*

Modern greats redefine a classic format.

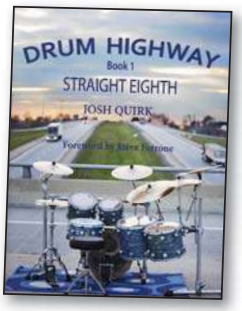
"Organ trio" routinely implies a bebop/blues-rooted sound. But organist Larry Goldings, guitarist Peter Bernstein, and drummer **Bill Stewart** have sculpted this format into a modern organism all their own. Performing intermittently since 1989, the trio is the longest collaboration in Stewart's storied jazz (and soul) career. That intimacy is evident in the unit's twelfth disc. Stewart possesses astonishing touch, musicality, swing, and clarity. It's also true of his bandmates; it's a breathing, conversational trio of the highest order. The phrasing and dynamic symbiosis is truly exquisite. Stewart contributes two originals: "Don't Ever Call Me Again," a fun, deceptively tricky number driven by his layered bouncing groove, and the contemplative ballad "Calm," bolstered by his whispering brushes. On "Fagen," he's exploratory yet unifying. The cover of Wayne Shorter's "Toy Tune" is transported by Stewart's relaxed swing feel and tremendous, expressive solo over the outro. A fully mature and never complacent collective. (Pirouet)

Jeff Potter

MULTIMEDIA

Drum Highway Book 1: Straight Eighth by Josh Quirk

A progressive, strategic approach to learning the basics of popular drumming.

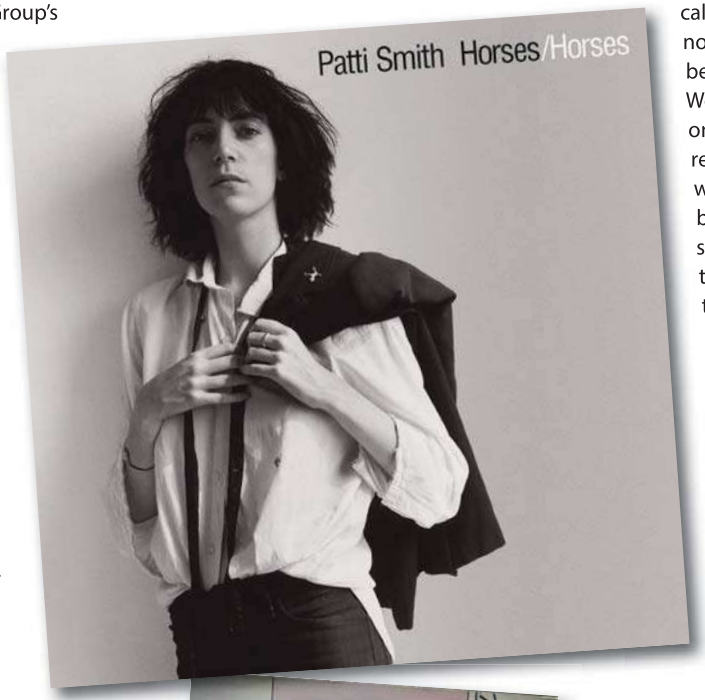


If *Drum Highway Book 1: Straight Eighth* is any indication, then twenty-five-year industry veteran Josh Quirk (Viktor Krauss, Eddie Shaw) intends to present a comprehensive course in modern popular drumming. As the title here implies, this first entry focuses on a meticulous approach to mastering the basic 8th/16th feel that serves as a foundation for most pop. What makes Quirk's approach to this subject attractive for beginners and experienced drummers alike, however, is the presentation: patterns are built in strategic increments, requiring readers to master the building blocks of a groove before adding more difficult frills and finally seguing into syncopated variations on the original theme. This organizing principle quells that age-old woodshed frustration of discovering that basic structural problems in a complicated beat are causing it to lag or slur. Drummers who learn the instrument through the lens of *Drum Highway* will benefit from Quirk's methodical approach. (drumhighway.com) **Keaton Lamle**

The Patti Smith Group "Because the Night"

The saying "It takes a village" certainly applies to the Patti Smith Group's breakthrough single "Because the Night."

Bruce Springsteen wrote the song around the time of his 1978 album *Darkness on the Edge of Town*. Jimmy Iovine, who engineered and mixed *Born to Run* and *Darkness* for Springsteen and was about to produce Smith's *Easter*, steered the song to Patti, who added lyrics of her own. Shelly Yakus engineered the track, dialing in an ideal drum sound for the song's shifting dynamic: ultra-sensitive during the hushed verses, big and bold like a Phil Spector production elsewhere. Tom Petty cited that drum sound as the reason he hired Iovine to produce *Damn the Torpedoes*.



Finally, let's give it up for Jay Dee Daugherty on drums. He drives a killer band performance on this slow-burning, dramatic track, which introduced mainstream audiences to punk poetess Smith and her group's artfully spastic brand of rock 'n' roll. Daugherty's kit work is a big part of the song's magic. He spreads tasteful flourishes (an upbeat hi-hat accent motif; the snare hits on the "&" of 1 that emphasize "be-CAUSE" as the choruses wind down) and kickass drum heroics (those massive snare and tom flams on the "&s" of 3 and 4 that bring the band in; the driving tom-tom groove in the guitar solo) throughout the track, which made it to number 13 on the Billboard Hot 100 in May 1978.

Daugherty is quick to credit the source material that inspired many of his drum parts. So make room for one more in the village responsible for turning "Because the Night" into such a classic. "I stole a lot from Max Weinberg," he admits with a laugh. "We were basically learning it off of a full [E Street Band] demo. That two-beat drum intro—that's totally Max. I've played it so many times that I think I wrote it. And the little upbeat hi-hat accent, I'm pretty sure that was on the demo."

One lick Daugherty is proud to call his own is the blazing 32nd-note snare roll out of the bridge, bearing a striking resemblance to Weinberg's roll into the guitar solo on Springsteen's "Prove It All Night," released a few months later. "I'm willing to cop to everything else, but I didn't steal *that* from Max," he says emphatically. "I probably did that because it's a little over the top; it just felt right there."

Daugherty says the Patti Smith Group was anything but a polished unit in those days, despite having a few hundred shows under their belt by the time they got to tracking *Easter*. "Poor Jack Douglas, who worked on the record before that [1976's *Radio Ethiopia*], was so frustrated with our professional amateurism. He would come out and try to conduct us, because we couldn't play to a click. He actually tried to quit the record." [laughs]

This begs the question, What was it like for a drummer admittedly rough around the edges to work with Jimmy Iovine, who historically clashed with Petty's drummer, Stan Lynch, while producing *Torpedoes* and subsequent albums? "There was an excitement factor Jimmy was going for," Daugherty recalls, adding with a laugh, "because he knew we really weren't the most exacting set of musicians."

Though "Because the Night" sounds like a fairly detail-oriented production, with so many nuances to Daugherty's parts and the song's dynamic builds, "There wasn't that much direction [from Jimmy]," according to the drummer. "We had a really good blueprint with Bruce's demo. The builds and the things like that—I think that might have just happened organically. As for all the fills and the cymbal crashes, he was probably encouraging me to do less by the time we got to the [keeper] take. I was doing so much after one take, he got on the mic and said, 'Are there flies out there? You trying to hit flies?'"

Daugherty currently endorses Tama drums, Sabian cymbals, Regal Tip sticks, and Evans and D'Addario products.

What's on That Song?

Daugherty played a six-piece Sonor kit on "Because the Night" (two rack toms, two floor toms) with Zildjian cymbals. He credits Yakus with getting such a powerful drum sound in the room, but says that without a tip from another engineer, his drums might not have sounded so good. "We were working at House of Music in Orange, New Jersey. I was using the house drums and struggling to get a good sound out of the toms, and the house engineer, Charlie Conrad, said, 'Oh, it's simple. You tune the bottom head first. You try to get a good fundamental tone with that, then you can do whatever you want with the top.' Before that, I was just twisting stuff around!"

Gang of Four's *Solid Gold*

One of the downsides of making a groundbreaking, influential album is that your other records often get overlooked. So it goes with Leeds, U.K., post-punk trailblazers Gang of Four. While the band's 1979 debut LP, *Entertainment!*, is rightfully hailed as a genre-defining album and an inspiration for multiplatinum artists like R.E.M., Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Nirvana, their 1981 follow-up, *Solid Gold*, has forever had to live in its shadow.

"*Entertainment!* has been written about so much, and *Solid Gold* gets somewhat under-recognized, but I think it's just as strong," says Hugo Burnham, Gang of Four's drummer from the band's inception until 1983. (He rejoined from 2004 to 2006.) One reason for *Solid Gold*'s languishing could be that it boasts nothing as instantly catchy as *Entertainment!*'s "I Found That Essence Rare" or "Damaged Goods." What *Solid Gold* lacks in hummable tunes, however, it makes up for with heavier, darker, groove-oriented songs. At the heart of those songs is Burnham's powerful, hypnotic drumming.

"*Solid Gold* was us feeling more confident in going that [groove-heavy] direction," says Burnham of Gang of Four circa 1981. "We were peaking, playing really well live, and we felt like, 'Okay, we've earned this. We're getting the second shot.' *Entertainment!* was two years of forging an identity as a drummer, but I *owned* more of my drumming on *Solid Gold*."

After recording both *Entertainment!* and 1980's *Yellow* EP in low-key English studios, the members of Gang of Four found themselves tracking *Solid Gold* in the most famous recording studio on Earth: North London's Abbey Road. The weight of being in such a legendary room was surely felt, but Burnham, guitarist Andy Gill, bassist Dave Allen, and vocalist Jon King found it exhilarating, not nerve-wracking. "It was brilliant," says Burnham, whose father, coincidentally, had appeared in the Beatles *Let It Be* film, which was partially filmed at Abbey Road. "There was no stress being in that room. It was more, 'Yeah! This is cool. Oh, look, I've seen *that* in the movie.'"

Abbey Road's spaciousness played a crucial role in defining *Solid Gold*'s sonic picture, giving more life and resonance to Burnham's drums. "It was such a fabulous, huge room," remembers Burnham. "*Entertainment!* was recorded in a tight room. We weren't *trying* to make the drums sound like cardboard boxes, but we were definitely going against that big, echoey, boomy 'rock' sound. We came back away from that with *Solid Gold*. It was a bigger, warmer-sounding record."

Another new addition to the mix was

American producer Jimmy Douglas. Douglas, whose résumé at that time included acts like Foreigner, the Rolling Stones, Slave, and Hall & Oates, was an unusual choice. But he proved a godsend for Burnham, who suffered a severe case of nerves (aka "red light fever") during the *Entertainment!* sessions. "I was much more comfortable with what I was doing on the second album," says Burnham. "Jimmy Douglas made it easier; he didn't make me feel I wasn't good enough. It was great to have a referee, and I didn't feel I was being judged for every little anomaly or slip up, the way I felt during *Entertainment!* I had no red light fever on *Solid Gold*."

Nearly four decades on, Burnham still has the custom-made black-with-red-striping Premier Resonator kit he played on *Solid Gold*. "I loved Premier because that's what Keith Moon played," explains Burnham. "I went to the factory, and I wanted red or gold sparkle, but the Premier rep said, '[Blondie's] Clem Burke was here last week and he got the last sheet.' [under his breath] Bastard."

The centerpiece of Burnham's *Solid Gold* kit was a specially made, unusually sized 18x20 bass drum. "I went with that rather than the John Bonham 26" massive thing," says Burnham. "The rack toms were both 14"—I just tuned them differently. The same as my two floor toms. I thought 18" floor toms were too boomy, so I had two 16" floor toms tuned slightly differently."

Burnham developed an early appreciation for drumming while seeing many of the 1970s' great rock bands in London and South East England. Particularly appealing was the "less is more" approach of Bad Company's Simon Kirke and Charlie Watts of the Rolling Stones. "I went to see Billy Cobham when I was sixteen," says Burnham, "and I thought, *Wow, I can never do that, so I'm not going to try.* John Bonham played incredible patterns, but essentially was straightforward and simple. 'Hit hard, don't hit them too often, leave the holes.' He defined all that, especially with the kick drum, and I loved that simplicity."

The lessons Burnham learned from Bonham, Watts, and Kirke are very much on display on *Solid Gold*. From the tom/hi-hat interplay on "In the Ditch," to the mesmerizing stomp of "What We All Want," to the Clyde Stubblefield meets John "Drumbo" French hyper-groove of "If I Could Keep It for Myself," each song has a unique, often tricky drum pattern that showcases Burnham's skill while also serving the song.

"I'd arrive at them mathematically," says Burnham, reflecting on the origin of *Solid Gold*'s drum patterns. "I'd be counting all the time in my head how many bits and which bit is the off-beat. All the while I'd be thinking, how can I make this sound more like [Jamaican session great] Winston Grennan without sounding cod-white-boy style?

"I felt much more confident about creating those patterns [on *Solid Gold*]," says Burnham. "Though there was still arguing and going back and forth with Andrew [Gill] about how they should sound. There's no question that I owe Andrew, Jon, and Dave. Some [in the band] have said, 'Oh, I wrote all the drum riffs.' No. But everyone was significant in the style I developed."

Of particular significance was bassist and rhythm section partner Dave Allen. "Dave was *very* important to my playing," says Burnham. "The two of us just sounded really good together. He was really fun to play with. We used to joke that when he joined we had to teach him to play a third as many notes, because he was the real musician in the band. He really knew his stuff, but he got it. He loved good music that we liked, whether it was Dr. Feelgood, Can, or Funkadelic."

When pressed to pick his favorite *Solid Gold* tracks, Burnham thinks for a moment and then becomes animated. Though he hasn't played the songs for years, they're still fresh in his mental *and* muscle memory. "'What We All Want' is my favorite; it was also my favorite to play live," he says as he hammers out the song's signature drum pattern on an imaginary drumkit. "It was 'Ba baba ba...two snare, top rack, top floor, and then bottom rack, bottom floor. And [*Solid Gold's* slow-burn lead-off song] 'Paralysed' is so beautiful. It's not soft—it's *controlled*. 'Outside the Trains Don't Run on Time' is fantastic because it's *unleashed*…it's like, *Arrgh!*"

Nearly forty years after its release, Burnham is still immensely proud of *Solid Gold*. "It's a pretty heavy, funky record," he says. Though Gill still records and tours with a new version of Gang of Four, Burnham feels his place in the band's history is secure. "I am the f**king Gang of Four drummer," he says. "There have been others—good guys, and this is not a condemnation of them. But I was the best."

Jon Wurster

The 2018 DCI World Championship Results

Some of drumming's best young rudimental talents compete for the ultimate title.

Story and photos by Lauren Vogel Weiss

This past August 11, the California-based Santa Clara Vanguard won the Drum Corps International World Championship, their seventh overall title since 1973 and their first since winning in 1999. SCV's 2018 production of "Babylon" led the way in Indianapolis, earning the corps a season-high score of 98.625, as DCI came to Lucas Oil Stadium for the tenth consecutive year. The competition has evolved exponentially in the past few seasons, as was notably evidenced with this year's theatrical displays of large props, costume changes, and performers, who were continuously on the move.

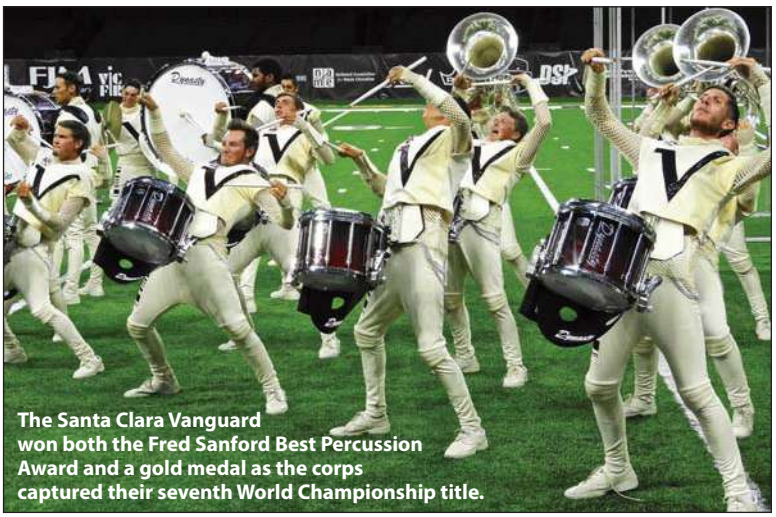
In addition to winning three other caption awards in the brass, visual, and general effect categories, for the third year in a row the Vanguard took home the Fred Sanford Best Percussion Performance Award—their fourteenth High Drum Award in the corps' history. That honor is named for Fred Sanford, the former SCV percussion arranger who taught the Vanguard drumline when they won their first five drum titles.

The first minute of "Babylon" was performed entirely by SCV's front ensemble. "The main theme of our show was 'My Body Is a Cage' by Peter Gabriel," said Vanguard music coordinator, percussion arranger, and caption manager Paul Rennick at the event. "Sandi [Rennick, Paul's wife and longtime co-arranger] went to town, and the musical introduction was one of the highlights of the show. The rhythms of our powerful opener [Peter Graham's "Journey to the Centre of the Earth"] kept the energy level high."

SCV's program included excerpts from Graham's "Metropolis 1927," which Rennick infused with a New Orleans groove; "Apology" from the *Automata* soundtrack by Zacarías M. de la Riva, during which the snare line performed on a ramp; and "Club Sound" by Gent & Jawns, which added an element of hip-hop to the corps' overall production. "I don't think any of the performers got tired of hearing [the program]," Rennick said. "And I honestly enjoyed every show all season. I also thought our final performance was the best one, which was a great way to end."

Although they traded wins with the Vanguard during DCI's first three 2018 shows in June, the Concord, California–based Blue Devils couldn't top SVC during the rest of the season. The Blue Devils finished second at the finals with a score of 97.35 and placed second in drums.

The Blue Devils' program "Dreams and Nighthawks" was based on the 1942 Edward Hopper painting "Nighthawks," which famously depicts four people in a downtown diner late at night. Musical selections in their film noir–styled production were written by John Adams, Simon Dobson, Earle Hagen, James Newton



The Santa Clara Vanguard won both the Fred Sanford Best Percussion Award and a gold medal as the corps captured their seventh World Championship title.

The Blue Devils earned their second silver medal in three years and placed second in drums.

The Calgary Stampede from Alberta, Canada, was named Grand Champion at DCI's DrumLine Battle.

Indiana's Elkhart Central High School BlazeLine won the independent division at the DrumLine Battle.

Howard, Carole King, Paul Lovatt-Cooper, David Raksin, and the Blue Devils' music director and arranger, Dave Glyde.

"We had to decide how to portray the [program's] villain, so that's why we used some of Michael Jackson's 'Smooth Criminal,'" said Scott Johnson, the percussion director for the Devils. "That was our first percussion feature and the one where the snare line did the moonwalk. From there, it went into what we called a cross-modulation, where the pit starts fast and ends slow while the battery starts slow and ends extremely fast."

Johnson explained that the second percussion feature in the program's closer was based in part on a piece that a Blue Devils alumnus, Amir Oosman, wrote for tenor drums and South Indian konnakol vocals. "I took snippets of that and put together a little tenor feature and, thanks to an electronic sample, we played the vocals along with the tenor piece," Johnson said. "It's very different for the activity, but extremely fresh and, I think, pretty exciting. That [section] went into a snare feature, which was about space. There was a lot of space between all the little [licks] they played, so it was extremely difficult to execute with all the cold attacks."

The Canton, Ohio–based Bluecoats, who won the DCI title in 2016, earned the bronze medal this year with their Billie Holiday–inspired show "Session 44." Carolina Crown, from Fort Mill, South Carolina, took fourth place and third in drums with their intense program "Beast." Two corps made significant improvements this season: Massachusetts' Boston Crusaders continued their climb, reaching fifth place, with their show "S.O.S.," which was complete with a moving circular stage; and the Mandarins, from Sacramento, California, earned their first spot in the elite top-twelve rankings with the Stravinsky-esque "Life Rite After." And Santa Clara continued their domination during the Championships as the Vanguard Cadets won gold at the DCI Open Class World Championship Finals in Michigan City, Indiana, earlier in the week.

Championship Saturday also featured the sixth annual DrumLine Battle, held in Indianapolis's Pan Am Plaza. Nine drum lines, including three from Canada and two differently abled groups, competed in the tournament-style bracket. Calgary Stampede, from Alberta, Canada, was crowned overall champion, besting Oregon, Wisconsin's Shadow line to win the Drum Corps Division bracket as well as Indiana's Elkhart Central High School, the Independent Division Champion, in the final overall round.

The 2018 DCI Performers Showcase

The Performers Showcase, sponsored for the fifth year by System Blue, allowed individual corps members to display their solo and ensemble chops at the Indiana Convention Center on August 8. Winning percussionists in nine categories represented five different corps.

Scott Johnson, the Blue Devils' percussion director, told *MD* at the competition that he's a big fan of the event. "It's great for the performers' own creativity, plus they get a chance to show off their skills," he said. "I encourage all of them to do Individuals, and we've been very fortunate." Blue Devils' members won four categories this year. "We actually get members because they know they can do Individuals, [an activity that] isn't allowed by a lot of drum corp. Our organization is a big believer in this event."

Twenty-year-old Cameron Cavender of the Santa Clara Vanguard won Best Individual Snare during the Performers Showcase.

For the second year in a row, Zachary Hudson, a twenty-two-year-old, third-year member of the Blue Devils, won three Individual and Ensemble awards, including the Best Individual Multi-Percussion title for his original drumset solo. Hudson was also a member of the winning Blue Devils Percussion Ensemble, with keyboard percussionist Michael Tran and synth player Garrison Goodwin, who played an original arrangement of "L'oiseau qui danse" by the Canadian band Tennyson. The trio also helped the Blue Devils take home the Mixed Ensemble award with Hudson's arrangement of Lettuce's "Lettsanity."

"This was my fifth year in both the drum corps and solo competition, and I wanted to challenge myself a little bit more," said Hudson, a senior music industry and jazz major at Middle Tennessee State University. "I'd always done a drumset solo, but this year I played over a live looping setup using Ableton Live, a Novation Launchpad, and a MIDI controller."

What's it like to play drumset in a world-class drum corps like the Blue Devils? "It's very different from playing drumset anywhere else," Hudson told *MD*. "My job in the ensemble is to connect the drum line's tempo to the front ensemble, so I have to be able to understand all of the drum line parts and how they relate to my parts and the front ensemble. Sometimes I listen to the bass drums, but other times I'll listen to the snares for the tempo. Or I'll just turn around and watch their feet for timing."

Two members of the Santa Clara Vanguard drum line also won percussion awards. SCV rookie Cameron Cavender won the Best Individual Snare award for his original solo "Chot Hocolate," and Josh Hirner, a fourth-year member, took home the Best Individual Multi-Tenor title for his original solo, "Penteract."

Other award-winning percussionists included marimbist Nicholas Soden of the Blue Devils and timpanist Tanner Effinger of the Raiders. The Colts, from Dubuque, Iowa, took home the Cymbal Ensemble title, and the Portland-based Oregon Crusaders won the Bass Drum Ensemble category.

Zack Hudson, drumset player with the Blue Devils, won three awards at the Performers Showcase: Best Multi-Percussion, Best Percussion Ensemble, and Best Mixed Ensemble

KIT OF THE MONTH

A Custom Cocktail

John Cutbill, of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, wanted a kit that was portable and had a small footprint, although he didn't want to sacrifice the functionality and sound of a typical full-size drumset. So he sketched an initial design of what would become this month's featured set, and he refined his idea with assistance from Allan Harding, manager of Vancouver's Rufus Drum Shop, and Jay Deachman, a Drumeo instructor and drum tech.

Cutbill tells *MD* that Harding called the team at DW to ask if they could make a kit based off his original ideas. "Their initial response was 'No, it won't work,'" Cutbill says. "Discussions followed with more detailed sketches, and finally the DW team got excited and said, 'Let's do it!'"

The final DW Custom Collector's Series set features maple and mahogany hybrid shells in a Black Oyster FinishPly wrap, and the kit includes a 5x12 snare, 5x10 and 6x12 toms, a 5.5x16 floor tom, and a 6x16 bass drum. DW Doobie Bars support the floor tom above the bass drum, and the toms and ride stand are attached to the bass drum and floor tom with DW Dogbone arms and clamps. Cutbill uses DW 6000 Series Ultralight hardware and the DW 5000S Sidekick bass drum pedal. And the drummer's Paiste cymbals include a Signature Traditional Light crash and ride, as well as Sound Edge hi-hats.

"The snare and toms sound deceptively full despite their smaller sizes," Cutbill says. "There was a challenge in separating the resonant overtones between the bass drum and floor tom, given their size and proximity. Jay's decades of drumming and teaching experience were put to the test as he tried numerous variations of heads, dampeners, and tunings." The final configuration for the bass drum features an Evans EMAD Coated batter and a G2 Coated resonant head with a KickPort FX-2BD resonant port and an Evans SoundOff mute pad. The floor tom has an Evans G12 Coated batter with a KickPort FX-2FT batter port and a G1 Clear resonant head.

Cutbill says that he can fit the set into three cases, and it can be packed and carried by one person. "It's a unique setup for sure," he says. "But it sounds great!"

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line.

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THE PERFECT MATCH: KARL BRAZIL, STANTON MOORE, CINDY BLACKMAN-SANTANA & GRETSCH BROOKLYN

Karl's Brooklyn Kit is a Deep Black Marine Pearl shell pack (GB-RC443-094) which includes a 14" × 24" bass drum, 16" × 16" floor tom and a 9" × 13" rack tom, plus add-on components which include a 14" × 22" bass drum and a 5" × 14" snare drum.

Stanton's Brooklyn Kit is a Creme Oyster Nitron shell pack (GB-E403-302) which includes a 14" × 20" bass drum, 14" × 14" floor tom and a 8" × 12" rack tom, plus add-on components which include a 14" × 26" bass drum, 16" × 16" floor tom, a 6½" × 14" chrome over steel snare drum and a 5" × 14" snare drum.

Cindy's Brooklyn Kit is a Gold Sparkle Nitron shell pack (GB-RC444-022) which includes a 14" × 24" bass drum, 16" × 16" floor tom, a 9" × 13" rack tom and a 6½" × 14" snare drum, plus add-on components including an 8" × 12" rack tom, a 14" × 14" floor tom and a 16" × 18" floor tom.

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